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Sheffield

THE NEW PRODIGAL.

A Novel

BY

STEPHEN PAUL SHEFFIELD, *F*

AUTHOR OF

"THE BURMAH TREASURE," "MUTUAL CONSOLATION SOCIETY," ETC.

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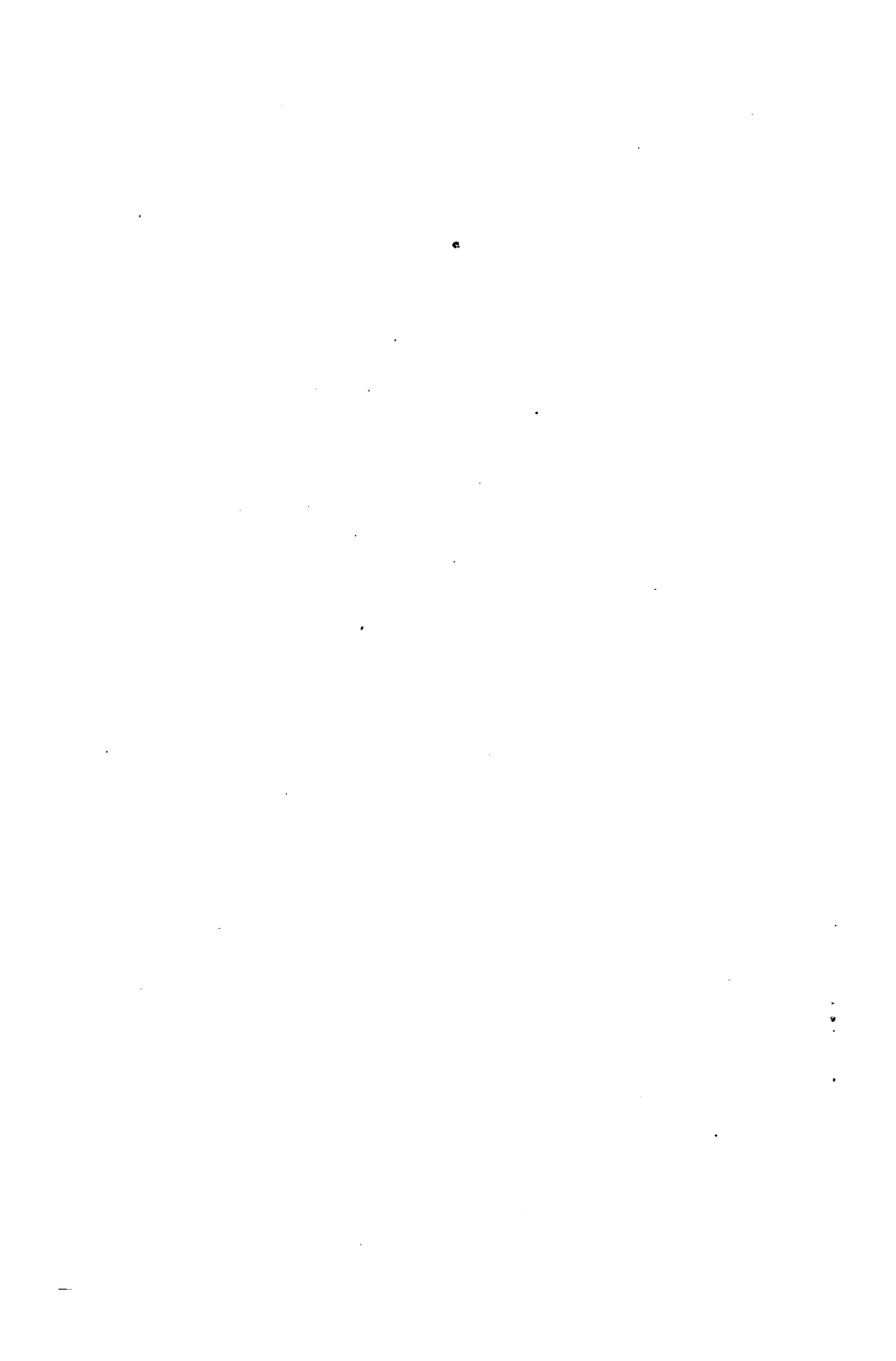
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Prodigal.

TO
CHARLES PEARSON, AND STEPHEN RALPH,
THIS NOVEL
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
BY THEIR FATHER,
THE AUTHOR.
BESSEMER, ALA., JANUARY, 1890.

PRESENTED
TO THE
ACTORS' FUND HOME,
— BY —

19.....



THE NEW PRODIGAL.

CHAPTER I.

One dismal November evening, during that period of our National history when Colonel Polk occupied the presidential chair, Calvin Adamant, D. D., sat in his study congenially occupied in the composition of his sermon for the following Sunday morning.

The wind howled angrily; the rain, mingled with sleet, dashed against the window; disagreeable currents of chilly air found ingress through various crevices never suspected to exist until the searching wind found them out; while heavy masses of clouds effectually prevented the moon, which was trying to do its duty as a nocturnal luminary, from achieving any marked success.

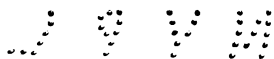
But the divine suffered none of these things to disturb him, and, as a matter of fact, he was in a particularly comfortable frame of mind—for him, that is. He liked dismal evenings; not because his well-warmed and lighted study was an agreeable contrast to the storm, cold, and darkness without, but for the reason that he was dismal by nature and education, and had a certain grim sympathy with nature when in these sullen moods. When a particularly vicious blast whistled around the gables of his dwelling, he did not draw up to the open fire-place with a sense of thankfulness for the cheerful blaze, but eyed it with a half

frown of disapproval, muttering to himself, while a chill crept along his vertebræ, "Man that is born of woman hath but a few days, and is full of trouble."

Dr. Adamant was a good man; but, like many another good man of his day, he considered it an essential part of Christian duty to be miserable. To him the New Jerusalem was obscured by such a dense smoke of burning brimstone forever ascending from the adjacent bottomless pit that he could only obtain, occasionally, indistinct glimpses of its glories, and the hosannas of the few redeemed were so completely drowned in the wailin of the many lost that he did not often hear them. The road to perdition was broad and easy to follow; the path to life eternal narrow and difficult to find; consequently, in his view, this transitory life should be little else than a continuous foreboding, and from his standpoint to smile was a sin, while to be unqualifiedly glad was akin to blasphemy.

Dr. Adamant ministered to a congregation which were mainly of his way of thinking—from force of habit. It was an old established society and a wealthy one; the elders were all either men of large substance or high social position; the deacons were influential in the outside world, and the mass of the congregation were "well-to-do" people. Even the sexton wore a swallow-tail coat on Sabbath day, and moved about in kid gloves and elegant, noiseless slippers, conducting such wandering sheep as chanced to stray thitherward to the theological manger where they could be filled—if they relished the provender.

It was an exceedingly prosperous society, but Lazarus never asked permission to become a member of it. I do not pretend to assert that Lazarus would have been rejected had he made application; but beggars as a class were not moved to congregate before the portals of the Doctor's church, and the commiserating dogs licked their wounds in other localities. The fact is, the members



of this model congregation moved in good society, and if an individual was in straitened circumstances he kept it to himself, well knowing that it was an understood, if unwritten, article of faith of the religious corporation to which he belonged that poverty only laid its afflicting hand upon such as had been guilty of some criminal weakness, or were naturally imbecile. We who are orthodox are bound to believe, of course, that the majority of those who are born into this world pursuant to the inscrutable plan of Infinite Wisdom will have no showing in the world to come, for the cogent reason that they have neglected to become identified with "our church;" but, peradventure, Infinite Mercy may mitigate, to some extent, the harsh sentence which, we conjecture, has been passed upon so many of the children of Adam.

A large percentage of Dr. Adamant's flock sincerely believed that the "eternal decrees" had assigned to them a part in the first resurrection, and inferred that the denunciatory discourses to which they were in the habit of listening were only intended to strike terror to the hearts of the great outside multitude preordained to be lost—who never came to hear them.

Some blindness of heart, a little pride, vainglory, and hypocrisy, a flavor of hatred and malice, with now and then a suspicion of uncharitableness, very possibly tarnished the private characters of some of these excellent people, for who is altogether without blemish of secret sin?

But, while I have been making this prosy digression, Dr. Adamant has been diligently at work upon his sermon and has reached the point—about midway in it—designated as "Firstly."

The text he had selected was a favorite one; it read: "If the righteous hardly be saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" It would be pleasant to thunder from these words to an appreciative audience com-

posed of the righteous who had a chance, if a poor one, for salvation, and who would naturally like to hear the sinners catch it, who had no chance at all. He had just written: "We hear, then, my beloved hearers, that even the righteous, they who have performed every duty and eschewed every evil, so far as humanity is capable of attaining this degree of perfection by unswerving faith and constant prayer, can only hope to escape, by the merest hair-breadth, from the vengeance of an angry God, and enter into the new Canaan; where, then, let us inquire, shall the sinner and——"

Before he could finish the interrogatory, however, his Hibernian handmaiden tapped at the study door, announcing that Elder Wayne was below and desired to speak with him.

Dr. Adamant frowned from habit; although, in this instance, it was really unpleasant to be interrupted in the middle of an eloquent passage; still he instructed Bidley to show the gentleman up-stairs, and prepared to receive him courteously. Mr. Wayne was a visitor who could not very well be received otherwise. To begin with, he was the senior elder, and such a personage can not be safely snubbed, even by his pastor; but, in addition to his official dignity, he was the head of a family as old as sin and as aristocratic as the gout—a family that, time out of mind, considered itself the center of the orbit in which society revolved, and society had long before, for some reason, ceased to contest the point.

Elder Wayne was not a rich man; one time and another he had inherited considerable property, in lands and otherwise, but these windfalls had been productive of no lasting good—indeed, it is doubtful if the combined incomes of the Vanderbilts would have kept the gentleman flush of funds. He was not extravagant in any common acceptation of the word; he was industrious, moreover, in his peculiar way; but his industry was usually manifested in some service to the

public or individuals, for which he received little compensation or none at all, and money disappeared from his possession as if by magic.

How the good man contrived not only to live, but to dispense a free-handed, if a rather out-at-the-elbows, hospitality, no one, least of all, himself, could have explained. My own impression is that a goodly flock of ravens were detailed by the same kind Providence who cared for the prophet in the wilderness to visit him daily, bringing such supplies as the exigencies of the case required.

People who were intimate with the Waynes used to whisper cautiously to each other that the family had known better days; but no one ever thought of hinting that the days upon which it had finally fallen were financially gloomy, or that the last of a line once celebrated for something like baronial state was now and then pressed for means. The searching eye of society which is commonly so swift to take notice when Impecuniosity steals away, one by one, the little elegancies that Pride has gathered together, never observed that the Wayne parlor carpet was growing shabby, or that the old claw-footed furniture was beginning to demonstrate the marks of time. The most prosperous among Dr. Adamant's parishioners were always glad of an opportunity to thrust their legs beneath the Elder's well-worn mahogany, and to pay their homage to Grandma Wayne, a magnificent old lady, as austere as the Calvinistic creed and as dignified as a diplomatist's note of defiance, who, in spite of her eighty years, queened it right royally over her son's household and the community.

This farther must be said descriptive of Elder Wayne: He was a gentleman of exquisite breeding, irreproachable morals, fine intellect, and profound culture. He was a Puritan, to be sure, for he had been reared in that narrow, uncharitable creed; yet, nevertheless, he was, at heart, a good Samaritan, ever ready to set any wayfarer who had come to

grief upon his own beast, to bestow upon him the oil and wine of Christian charity, and to pay his way at the inn, whether he had the price of a dinner left in his pocket after the score was settled or not.

When such a man becomes a ruling elder in a rich church, he is entitled to large consideration; and so thought Dr. Adamant.

"Ah, Brother Wayne, I'm glad to see you," the divine said, with a frosty smile, when his visitor was ushered in; "no evil has, I trust, befallen you or yours."

"No new evil, Doctor; there is, however, a new phase of the old one—I have tidings at last from my son Stephen."

"Where is the young Hittite, and what is he doing?"

"Scarcely a young Hittite, considering his parentage," the Elder said, rather stiffly. "My son was in New York when I heard from him, and he had engaged to go to sea in a merchantman before the mast."

"This must not be permitted, Brother Wayne, it must not be permitted; go, go, without the loss of a moment, and bring him home, and see that he is suitably chastised!"

"So I would, perhaps," the father answered, with just the suspicion of a twinkle in his eye, "but the fact is, the young rascal did not advise us of his whereabouts until his ship was upon the point of sailing, or, rather, had sailed, for some port in Central America."

Dr. Adamant looked as though he would have liked to make use of a strong expletive on receipt of this information; but he controlled himself, and relieved his mind by exclaiming in small caps., "BLESS MY SOUL!"

CHAPTER II.

The youngster—then just passed sixteen years of age—whose last escapade had been the moving cause of Elder Wayne's evening visit to his pastor's study, had been in disgrace with some of the constituted domestic authorities from the cradle.

As soon as the urchin could creep, he began to carry consternation to the maternal heart by the ingenuity he displayed in getting his head broken and in contracting whatever infantile maladies were current in the neighborhood. Happy mothers who brought nice children into this world of sorrow could leave them on the floor placidly staring into vacancy while they ran to the nearest house to secure a little soul-balm in the way of gossip, feeling sure of finding the olive branches where they left them upon returning; but, if Mrs. Wayne turned to take a pan of biscuit from the oven, her Steve promptly rolled down the cellar-stairs or plunged into the wash-tub filled with bluing water, from which he emerged looking like a heathen deity carved from indigo, and bellowing like a young bull of Bashan.

Somehow, he managed to escape with his life from the innumerable perils toward which he instinctively gravitated, and reached the trowsers period, after which he began to develop a remarkable aptitude for miscellaneous iniquity.

His first strictly masculine suit of garments were prematurely ruined by an involuntary dive into the mill-pond, which he had visited, contrary to the paternal statute in such case made and provided; the preliminary use he made of the hatchet with which his sire presented him on the fifth anniversary of his birth was to amputate the cat's tail, and

he brought anguish to the soul of Mr. Sweet, his eldest sister's admirer, by inserting a cruelly long pin in the cushion of the chair where the young man was wont to strike picturesque attitudes when he came to woo.

Mr. Sweet was a theological student, and, consequently, denied the luxury of swearing, at least in the vernacular, but he muttered something that sounded like "*anathema maranatha*," and spent the next day or two in the composition of a sermon on "total depravity," keeping that boy in his mind as an admirable illustration of the doctrine.

Of course the little scapegrace was the apple of his mother's eye, for what woman ever failed to dote upon the son who kept her in a perpetual worry and made himself a nuisance to the rest of the world? Beside there was a peculiar bond of sympathy between them: He was very like her in feature; he inherited her warm, poetic temperament; and was affectionate, too, whenever out of mischief long enough to exhibit that amiable trait. Mrs. Wayne was certain he possessed remarkable genius which would one day place him on some dizzy pinnacle of renown. She was an ambitious woman, although not many were aware of it, and being a devoutly religious one, also, had, not unnaturally, set her heart on seeing Steve a clergyman. In imagination, she beheld him a great pulpit orator, swaying multitudes by his words of burning eloquence, and, more than that, a good man, whose daily life should be a perpetual bright example for less highly favored soldiers of the cross to emulate.

The boy was bright enough to make at least an approximate realization of the maternal dream possible, but his leaning toward early piety was deplorably slight. He rawned over the biographical sketches of good little boys in the Sunday-school books who preferred to give their pocket money to the foreign missions instead of purchasing marbles or taffy, and he confided to his mother his fixed determi-

nation of becoming a pirate as soon as he was big enough to run away.

This state of spiritual darkness was somewhat discouraging, but Mrs. Wayne was by nature hopeful, and besides had great faith in the salutary effects of Christian training. Steve got the Christian training, especially on Sunday. On that day, rain or shine, sick or well, he accompanied the family to the sanctuary, where he sat, with bewildered brain and aching limbs, on a high seat, while Dr. Adamant labored through "Eighteenthly," "Nineteenthly," "Lastly," "Finally" and "Conclusion," wondering, in his childish way, what it all meant, and what spirit of perversity ever invented such unutterable torture for a boy who wanted to be out of doors and yelling like a Comanche. The mystery was beyond his solution, but he firmly resolved that if he ever lived to be his own master, he would never set foot inside a church again, and he adhered to that resolution for a good many sad, disastrous years thereafter. In the afternoon he was treated to another entertainment of like character, and reached home about three o'clock, when he was placed in a tall chair with "Baxter's Saints' Rest" to amuse him. The family resided upon a romantic, although rather dilapidated, farm. The fields and woods, as the little prisoner caught glimpses of them from the window those interminable afternoons, used to look wonderfully attractive. How he longed to rush away to them and freedom; but that, he well knew, could not be, for the most decorously quiet walk through the forest glades, or along the margin of the creek, would have been a flagrant desecration of the Holy Day in the estimation of his parents; and had he asked to while away an hour by the perusal of the "Swiss Family Robinson"—the most delightful book that ever boy devoured, from first to last, and then devoured over again—the request would have been sternly refused, and he would have been lucky if he had not been ordered to commit a chapter in "Romans" to

memory before bed-time, by way of penance for the profane desire.

"I wonder what folks do in Heaven?" Steve asked, one Sunday evening, by way of breaking the monotony which was becoming unendurable, for the entire family were nodding over some eminently sound—and heavy—theological works.

"There will be a never-ending Sabbath in Heaven, my son," the Elder said, rousing up. "I am glad to find your mind dwelling upon such subjects."

"O thunder!" the young reprobate howled, in blank dismay and forgetful of the presence in which he stood. "A Sabbath that's going to last forever, and Dr. Adamant preaching all the time! Well, I don't want to go to Heaven, that's sure."

For a moment Elder Wayne was too completely dumbfounded to speak or move, but he presently recovered the use of his faculties, and, taking the culprit into custody, marched him to the rear of the house, and a wail of woe in that vicinity presently indicated that the rod was performing its potent part.

Father and son returned after a brief interval, the former flushed and a little angry, the latter tearful and mentally defiant.

"Now go to your room," the Elder said, "and you will commit the 119th Psalm to memory and repeat it before you will be allowed to partake of food."

The juvenile evil-doer picked up a Bible and withdrew, full of contumacious wrath. On reaching his apartment he first kicked the sacred volume across the floor; but I am glad to be able to record that, a moment later, he was fairly frightened at his act, and, in order to recover his mental equipoise, he softly whistled the first bars of a popular melody. Then he thought he would get out of the window, if he could without breaking his neck, and run away to the

woods; not to those belonging to the farm, but to some other unknown, more extensive forests, where he would have birds and squirrels for companions, beech-nuts and berries to satisfy the demands of appetite. The project grew in attractiveness as he examined it more in detail. It would be almost as good as living on a desert island, like the Swiss Family, and at all events worth trying.

He had just thrown his small leg over the window-sill, intending to drop and take his chances of fractured bones, when the door was softly opened and his mother entered, with traces of tears on her sympathetic face.

"Where were you going?" she asked, kindly.

It was an awkward question to answer truthfully, and as Steve would not tell a lie—when he could conveniently help it—he kept still and looked foolish.

"You've made me feel very badly," Mrs. Wayne continued, without pressing the question further, "and your father is quite displeased; don't you think you should ask his forgiveness?"

"No, I don't," the seven-year-old sinner promptly responded; "I just said I didn't want to go to Heaven, where it's going to be Sunday all the time, and then he licked me and gave me that nasty Psalm to learn."

"O Steve, what a word to use about anything in the Holy Bible!"

"Well, maybe it ain't quite nasty, but there's a thousand verses of it, and I should starve before I could learn it. I won't try. I wish I was big enough to run away and be a pirate."

"You should not say such things, my son; don't you know that pirates are dreadfully wicked men?"

"Can't help it; they don't have to go to meeting as ever I heard."

"But, Steve, you should like to go to meeting and learn to be good."

"Don't want to be good. All the good boys die with measles or something, and never have any fun."

In her heart the mother thought that there were some extenuating circumstances in the case; the boy talked dreadfully, but was there not some excuse to be made for him? She had sometimes found Dr. Adamant's sermons on God's vindictiveness rather tedious; what, then, must they be to a mercurial child who could not understand their import or follow a chain of reasoning? Was it strange that this curled, sun-browned, rollicking little animal, whose pockets were probably at that moment stuffed with black beetles, kite strings, clam shells, and like treasures, should yearn to be at large upon that as upon other days? Was it quite reasonable to expect that he would find much comfort in the "Saints' Rest," although the work was unquestionably an excellent one? And finally, where between the lids of the Bible was authority given to make little ones unhappy on that day divinely appointed for REST? Could Steve rest in the family pew, listening to sermons over which the good elders and deacons took the liberty of going to sleep, or perched in a chair with a book that was beyond his infantile comprehension?

Mrs. Wayne was startled when she found such heterodox thoughts occurring to her, and was half minded to say, "Get thee behind me, Satan;" but she took an infinitely more sensible course; she sat down upon the floor before the open window, drew the dear little transgressor to her bosom, and hugged him until his stubborn heart was as soft as her own; then she began the recital of a beautiful story, improvised for the occasion, which had its own perfectly apparent moral; then, when the twilight began to gather, she knelt reverently, and that sweetest and purest of petitions, a mother's prayer, went up to Him who has bidden us all to pray.

"I'll learn the old Psalm just to please her, if it busts

me," Steve said, when he was left to himself. "Maybe I won't be a pirate, if she's going to feel too bad about it, but I'll run away, all the same."

With these heroic words, he picked up the Bible, lighted a candle, and fell resolutely to work. Soon he was nodding; then he dropped off into the deep, restful slumber of childhood, and, two hours later, his father found him still sleeping, with one chubby hand resting on the page he had been endeavoring to memorize.

I think it must have occurred to the Elder that he had not acted with exact justice toward the little fellow, of whom he was really very fond, but, however this may be, he summoned his wife to dispose of him for the night, and the next morning the unexecuted part of the sentence was formally remitted.

Let it not be supposed, because I criticise some puritanical notions, that I would see the Christian Sabbath desecrated, or that I sympathize with any school of free-thinkers, ancient or modern. I believe the Sabbath was intended as a day of rest. I believe it to be infinitely becoming for Christian people to assemble in the church of their choice, and join in the public worship of the Most High; but those who have obeyed the first part of the command, and labored during the six days, may, with entire propriety, indulge in any innocent rest on the seventh that does not interfere with the more devotional views of their neighbors. No child of tender years should be compelled to sit through prosy sermons, and no child of any age should be forced to read the Scriptures as a punishment. But if the mother will gather her brood about her in the evening, and read, with those inflections that only her voice possesses, any of the beautiful narratives with which the Bible abounds, an interest would be awakened in its pages, and the little hearers would soon become readers for themselves of their own accord.

Master Steve's education did not progress in a manner that was at all satisfactory to those who had his well-being at heart. It was the era of infant schools, and to one of these he had been sent before attaining his fifth year, but gained no scholastic honors. He had learned to read in some inexplicable manner, but was not apparently ambitious to enlarge his list of attainments. His teacher, Miss Spankem, a maiden lady of slender intellectual powers, austere morals, and no force of character, conceived a liking for him, and he presently ruled her with a rod of iron, doing precisely as he pleased. He read such childish stories as fell in his way, and thought a good deal for one of his years. Then he spent much time wandering about the woods, getting acquainted with nature, and learning something from the trees, flowers, and animals.

In this manner he spent his time, and perhaps not quite unprofitably, till he was ten; then his father suddenly discovered that the boy, from whom his mother was anticipating extraordinary things in the way of learning, was a dunce, and straightway despatched him to Mr. Walworth's academy, accompanied by a note informing the pedagogue of the lad's educational short-comings, and desiring that a respectable amount of knowledge might be beaten into his head by any heroic process that promised to accomplish the result with the least loss of time. Mr. Walworth accepted the trust, and discharged it to the best of his ability, but the youngster made no rapid advance in the world of science. He dabbled a little in chemistry and physics, acquired considerable historical and geographical information, got pretty well to the bottom of Brown's Grammar, gave geometry and French something more than a passing notice, and committed the multiplication table to memory, although secretly regarding it as an unparalleled nuisance. He continued to prowl about by himself, as he had done while at Miss Spankem's Seminary, and to philosophize over a good many

problems which fellows of his age do not commonly bother about.

An impression prevailed for a time among Steve's fellow-toilers along the hard highway of learning that he was rather a milksop, in consequence of which he was held in derision; but one memorable day, while suffering from a terrible affront, he developed admirable fighting qualities. On this occasion he blackened the eye and sadly disfigured the nose of Prometheus Stebbins, the school bully, in a round of fisticuffs which lasted six minutes according to the chronometer of Mr. Walworth, who, on the sly, was watching—and enjoying—the contest from behind the curtains of the recitation-room window.

Some momentous results followed this passage at arms. The whipped bully belonged to a family that did not attend Dr. Adamant's church and was not recognized in society.

Prometheus—the name had been bestowed upon him by his mamma, not a learned lady, who had stumbled upon it in a volume of poetry—had an intense admiration for the juvenile aristocrat who had licked him, and thenceforward became his abject slave, while the rest of the little savages whom Mr. Walworth was endeavoring to civilize, recognizing in him a born leader, promptly swore allegiance, and obeyed his slightest command. The pedagogue, too, who believed, among other things, that "blood will tell," was by no means displeased that Steve had gained the victory, and before he was aware of it began to take a genuine pride in him.

Steve, no doubt, should have used his recently-acquired influence over his associates to the establishment of some great moral reform; but I am sorry to be under the necessity of recording that he did nothing of the sort; on the contrary, he led them off on surreptitious woodchuck hunts and headed expeditions to remove front gates and transpose business signs during the hours of darkness. He also

became the presiding officer of a precocious band of evil-doers, who drank ginger beer and smoked penny cigars when the angels should have been watching over their innocent slumbers.

The association was called the "League of Honor," but, as the members were all solemnly pledged "not to tell," I am bound to say nothing of its great secrets, for was not I once a member in good and regular standing? How many others, I wonder, are still living, wrinkled and gray-bearded? I do not know; but, should this page meet the eye of any, I extend to him the old fraternal greeting. That was a glorious season, brother; but there have been so many disappointments, mortifications, and heart aches since those palmy days; there have been so many blossoms of hope which never came to maturity; so many ambitions have died, and so many graves have closed over loved ones, that I would not, if I could, venture back again and attempt the journey of life a second time.

At the expiration of six years Steve was at the foot of his classes and universally conceded to have a larger fund of general information than any lad in school. If he had not studied much, he had gone through a tremendous amount of reading, and appeared to know something about pretty nearly every subject that was broached. Mr. Walworth loved him with a curious affection, and was sure that a brilliant future was in store for him, but the magnates of Dr. Adamant's church learned with dismay of the quantity of wild oats he was sowing, and referred to him so pointedly in their Wednesday evening prayer-meeting, that his father was constrained to take some steps to prove that he was not an accessory after the fact of his son's transgressions. The next time Steve was at home for a half holiday the Elder invited him to the barn and interviewed him with a horse-whip, not in expiation of any particular fault, but upon general principles.

The chastisement was severe; but Steve endured it as became the presiding officer of the "League of Honor." He swore some savage mental oaths, however, and made some resolves, which, had they been expressed in words, would have proved that there was still a good deal of the old Adam in him which could only be eradicated by the efficacy of saving grace.

The boy went back to the Academy; but not to improve his time in scholastic application. He devised schemes of startling iniquity, and executed them so warily that, for a time, he escaped detection and consequent punishment.

But sinners, great or small, can not go on forever without paying the penalty that is the logical concomitant of wrongdoing. There came a time when the "League of Honor" forfeited its right to bear that name. It procured real beer and stunning ale from an indiscreet *attaché* of the village inn, and the members, one and all, became entirely oblivious to surrounding circumstances. Indeed, they went to sleep upon and under the convivial table, in which condition they were discovered by a lynx-eyed official of the school, who aroused them. Very sick they were, very much disgusted with their first sacrifice to Bacchus, and dreadfully ashamed of themselves when it was just a little too late.

There was an awful scandal. A few of the young Bacchanalians, who were without social influence, vanished from the Academy; others were punished in various exemplary ways; while Steve was invited to another confidential interview in the barn, and when he emerged therefrom his shirt was cut into strips across the shoulders, and there were ugly red ridges upon his back from which some blood was oozing.

The lad was left to himself for a few hours to contemplate the truth of the Scriptural assertion that "the way of the transgressor is hard." He was convinced, no doubt, but not altogether penitent, apparently; anyhow, he contrived

to exchange confidences with Prometheus Stebbins in the course of the afternoon, and the next morning both youngsters were missing.

CHAPTER III.

It doubtless occurs to the reader that our young friend did not exhibit a fastidious taste in the selection of a companion for his exodus, but he acted upon a considered plan, and thought he knew what he was about.

He had determined to go to sea, and, as the voyage might terminate in shipwreck on a desert island, as, indeed, all voyages do in properly-constructed works of nautical fiction, he thought he might as well take his man "Friday" along with him. The desert island would, of course, be provided with a salubrious climate, together with breadfruit, coconuts and what-not; enough seamen's chests were to be washed ashore to provide raiment for a series of years, and a hut could be easily constructed, which, if it did not have all the conveniences of a modern brown-stone front, would be far more charming as a place of residence; but it might be a considerable time before the legitimate "Friday" put in an appearance, and in the *interim* the chances were that a fellow might not only get lonely, but have more manual labor to perform than was agreeable. Upon the whole, Steve, having resolved to set out upon an adventurous career, did well, probably, to take Prometheus, who could be made available in various servile capacities; and our young friend had a strong aristocratic liking for a follower to fetch and carry.

Prometheus had no objection to going or to following his leader to the world's end, and was entirely satisfied with the position assigned to him.

The runaways did not have much money, but one of them

had determination, which often serves as a good substitute for it in legitimate as well as illegitimate enterprises. Steve was thoroughly in earnest. He packed his Sunday suit, a Bible that did not bear the marks of hard usage, a miniature likeness upon ivory of his mother, and the "Saints' Rest" into a portmanteau which had come down to him from a great uncle whose name he bore. The "Saints' Rest" he intended to throw overboard as soon as he was off soundings, and in that way pay off a grudge of his childhood; the other articles had a value in his eyes, especially his mother's miniature, over which the rascal dropped some such tears as the angels bottle up and preserve against that day of final reckoning when every one may, perchance, avail with Him whose mother stood at the foot of the cross whereon he perished.

Prometheus had been instructed to look after the *commissariat*, and in a grain sack he bestowed a quantity of bread, half a cheese, and several pounds of dried beef, all adroitly purloined from Elder Wayne's store-room. With this provision the adventurers would be secure for a considerable time, unless fortune should be especially sullen.

Prometheus also encumbered himself with a flint-lock shotgun, the only personal property he possessed, and was minded to take along an old cavalry saber, also, which his father had stolen somewhere and valued highly; but to this last armament Steve objected, and the ancient weapon was left dangling from the front gate, and was ultimately rescued by some one of the Stebbin's family. It now hangs, I may add, in the library of Col. Obadiah Stebbins, who retreated with great credit in several engagements during the War of the Rebellion. The Colonel informs curious persons who inquire about it that it was wielded by one of his ancestors at the battle of Bunker Hill.

At midnight, agreeable to appointment, Prometheus was beneath the window of Steve's room, equipped as before mentioned, and gave a preconcerted signal, indicating that

"the coast is clear." Our black sheep threw out his port-manteau, sprang after it himself, and made off.

It was but a few miles to the Erie Canal, that artificial river which flows through the Empire State from west to east; toward this the runaways journeyed, and reached it before daylight. Their arrival was opportune; for a canal boat, the *H. Clay*, commanded by Captain Hornfager, a tall, good-natured fellow in oilcloth trousers, was just passing, and readily engaged to transport them to Albany for a sum which they were able to pay and still have a little silver in their pockets.

The Captain was a middle-aged, childless man, whose wife sailed with him, and the honest couple were considerably taken with our young friend. The Captain made some inquiries of Steve as to his ultimate intentions, and when informed upon that point, came to the conclusion that the boy stood in need of sound advice, with perhaps a little timely assistance also, both of which he felt ready, in the goodness of his heart, to tender.

Captain Hornfager understood, as most likely Master Wayne iniquitously intended he should, that his new acquaintance was an orphan, with no relative upon whom to call for assistance in the hour of need and no estate to render him an object of solicitude.

The Captain knew something about the delights and dangers of a sailor's life. He had made a voyage to the Grand Banks in a cod-fish vessel while he was still young and impressable; he had voyaged on the Erie Canal ever afterward; but the romance of the ocean still lingered in his memory, and at heart he respected any boy who longed for the blue water and had the pluck to try and reach it.

"He's a smart chap, Cynthy Ann," the Captain said to his spouse, when they were alone together, shortly after Steve's advent on board, "and I guess we might as well help him along a bit. I can learn him to steer, and that critter

he's got along with him could help you peel taters and wash kettles, so we won't be out much if I give him back the passage money."

"I wish he was ourn, Samwell," the woman answered, with a look of longing on her homely face; "we never had no boy nor gal neither."

"Never a boy nor gal, more's the pity, Cynthy Ann; but about this feller, shall we give him a lift?"

"If he wants to go to sea, why can't he stay with us, Samwell?"

"You can't go to sea on a canal-boat, you blessed old fool, and a canal-boat is no place for a boy with any git-up in him; but my steersman wants to quit at Syracuse, anyhow, so we'll keep him 'long with us for a spell, and see what comes on it."

What came of it was that Steve soon warmly reciprocated the attachment the worthy couple entertained for him; he would have been a despicable cur if he had not, for they were most kind to him. The Captain initiated him into the mysteries of canal navigation, and in a short time he was able to render him valuable assistance in the management of the boat, while Mrs. Hornfager petted him as though he had been her very own. She was not, however, favorably impressed with Prometheus, neither was her husband, but she made the scion of the Stebbins family available in her narrow kitchen, and gave him some useful education, moreover. She taught him, with the assistance of a rolling pin—a powerful incentive to learning in her muscular grasp—how to make bread and biscuit, also plain pies and puddings; so, in process of time, Mr. Stebbins was transformed from a stupid blockhead into a respectable cook.

Time, and a good deal of it, elapsed before the slow sailing craft crept down to Albany, but Steve enjoyed every hour of the voyage. It was his first journey, and the

picturesque scenery of the Mohawk Valley was a delightful poem that impressed itself indelibly on his memory. More than one moonlight night he spent wholly on the deck, watching the slowly-changing panorama, conscious of a new ambition to see the great world in which he dwelt and to play a man's part in its busy life.

Prometheus, among the pots and kettles, was not disturbed by any romantic fancies; neither was he especially unhappy. Mrs. Hornfager kept him pretty closely to his new duties, but he fared sumptuously, and, upon the whole, was inclined to think he had decidedly bettered his condition by running away.

In fact, both of these young rascals were having quite too good a time thus far, and, if they had experienced something more of difficulty and hardship at the commencement of their surreptitious dash into life, it would no doubt have been better for them. Their seeming luck was only a misfortune in disguise; they were regaling upon taffy; but there was a dose of wormwood preparing for them which they would have to swallow in due season.

At Albany the canal-boat voyage ended, but Captain Hornfager did not think it quite prudent to leave his *protégé* to his own devices for some time longer. Steve was a remarkably sharp youngster, in the Captain's estimation, and appeared to be ballasted by tolerably correct principles, but he was going to New York, which, morally speaking, was little better than a great seething caldron of iniquity, and in it the boy would most likely perish if there was no faithful, experienced friend to watch over him.

So the Captain informed "Cynthy Ann" that the craft was to be left in her charge for a season, while he accompanied our adventurers to the metropolis and saw them safely launched on the briny deep.

"If he'd only stay here and be our'n," Cynthy Ann said, with a sigh. "It 'pears like I was sot on it, Samwell."

"Wall, then, you don't want to git sot on nothin' that can't be in the nature of things. Why didn't you have a boy of your own, if you're so drefful fond of 'em?"

"It was denied me, as you well know, Samwell, and this is such a nice boy. Do let me keep him."

"Keep him! you old stupid, you couldn't keep him, nor I couldn't, and we hadn't neither on us orter want to if we could. He wa'n't raised with the like of us; there's the right place for him somewhere in the world, and he's got to go and find it."

"I suppose you're right," the woman said, sadly. "I know I ain't like what his own ma was."

"You just bet you ain't. He's got a pictur' of her, and she's as pretty as a doll; and she's got curls, and lace round her neck, and a silk frock."

"I wa'n't so very bad lookin' when I was young," Cynthia Ann answered, while a flush crept over her worn, sallow face.

"Oh, yes, you was," the Captain rejoined, with the air of a man who was stating an incontrovertible truth. "I married ye because you was so all-fired homely. I knowed I'd never have no cause for jealousy."

A dangerous light flashed from Mrs. Hornfager's eyes. She looked around for the rolling-pin, and the Captain, observing this movement, inferred that a storm was brewing, so he escaped to the deck, like a sensible mariner, leaving the partner of his joys and sorrows to expend her wrath upon Prometheus, which she did as soon as she could bring him within range of her athletic tongue.

The next day a sloop was found about to sail down the river. Upon this Captain Hornfager secured passage for himself and the two lads, generously defraying the entire charges therefor.

While Steve stopped to say some good-bye words to the poor woman who had been so kind to him, Prometheus, whose adieux had been quickly said, took advantage of a

favorable opportunity to steal a plum-cake from the pantry, which, together with the Captain's monkey-jacket and his own shot-gun, he safely conveyed to the sloop before our hero had succeeded in reconciling Mrs. Hornfager to the impending separation. He thanked her in all sincerity for the many kindnesses she had shown him, and promised to keep her advised of his doings in the great world where he was to cut such a figure; then he permitted her to give him a tremendous maternal hug, which nearly took his breath away, and to huggle a curl from his head with the carving-knife—her scissors could not be found for the moment—then he kissed her thin, tear-stained cheek and darted away, leaving her weeping piteously, with a soiled kitchen apron thrown over her frowsy head. The picture certainly had a ridiculous side, but, I am happy to say, the young reprobate did not see it. He remembered that this plain, uncultured woman had been a friend at a time when a friend was most welcome; that she was disinterestedly fond of him; so he forgot that she was illiterate, uncomely in face, angular in figure, untidy in dress, as he walked slowly from the first home he had found after abandoning the one to which he had been born.

They had a splendid run down the river, and Steve was almost stricken dumb by the grandeur of the scenery he beheld. In his innermost heart he doubted whether there was anywhere else on this planet such a noble, smoothly-flowing stream, such grim, frowning mountains, such a confusion of beetling crags overshadowed by such a funereal drapery of diminutive cedars.

In due time they reached the Empire City, and the Captain found accommodations in a public house on Peck Slip, which accorded with his tastes and the financial condition of the party.

Dear, dear, what a life it was which the country boy saw around him; what a strange exhilaration it carried with it;

what a rush and roar there were; how far away and how insipid seemed the old life at Mr. Walworth's academy.

Prometheus was at first somewhat nervous, and gave his comrade to understand that he was oppressed by a dread of being run over by the wheeled vehicles, and he also complained that he could not think because of the noise.

"Don't try to think, then," Steve said, briskly. "Thinking doesn't come natural to you, my good fellow, and you don't want to strain your mind unnecessarily. Your carcass is safe enough, I should say. These fellows, careless as they appear, would never drive over a person when there was a policeman at every corner."

"Blest if there ain't solid hoss sense in the boy's noddle," Captain Hornfager said to himself, "and he'll make his way, he will, if he's half a chance. I don't wonder Cynthia Ann hankered for him."

To our young rural friend the great city was a new world, busy, restless, wonderful. He felt ambitious and altogether like another person, while he watched the swollen stream of humanity flowing on, on ceaselessly. How were all those people who seemed to be in such a hurry employed? Where and how did they live? Were any, like him, without experience, friends, influence, or money, and had any of them ever suffered real privation? Privation might mean a great deal in the city; and how would it seem to move, an unnoticed unit, among that multitude of strangers, without the price of a loaf of bread or of a night's lodging in one's pocket? But again, why should anyone so move, for surely in such a world there must be something for all to do.

"I like it," was the conclusion at which the boy arrived, after a day's experience. "It would be worth while living here, and any chap ought to be able to take care of himself. I'd try it if I had not made up my mind to go to sea, and if I get tired of sailing, I'll come back here."

Captain Hornfager allowed himself twenty-four hours in

which to renew his acquaintance with the New York lions, then he turned his face resolutely toward South street, intent upon finding a ship that could furnish employment for a couple of country lads who were anxious to learn what "life on the ocean wave" amounted to in prose.

Luck favored Hornfager. On the deck of the first vessel he boarded he encountered Mr. Jerubdiah Budlong, with whom he was very well acquainted. Both men were natives of Cooksaukie, on the Hudson, and in their youthful days had been inseparable. They had also been shipmates on the cod-fish voyage which constituted such an important episode in Captain Hornfager's history, but after that their ways diverged. Budlong stuck to salt water, and had risen to be first mate of the barque *Delilah*, while Hornfager, as we have seen, attained the rank of a canal-boat captain. The former shipmates had kept up a haphazard correspondence, and managed to meet often enough to continue acquainted with each other's features and worldly fortunes.

When the formal greetings were over, and each had asked and answered a score or two of questions, the Captain explained the business he had immediately in hand.

"What sort of chaps have you got in tow?" Mr. Budlong queried, with an encouraging show of interest.

"One of them is smart as steel; t'other is an ord'nary cuss, but my woman larnt the critter to cook pretty handy, and he's worth his grub—mebby a little more; you needn't pay him the difference, though, 'cos he'll steal enough to keep even."

"He'll learn morals, as well as manners, if he sails with me," Mr. Budlong said, sententiously. "Mayhaps I can find a berth for the youngers; bring 'em aboard to-morrow; I'll have a look at 'em, anyway; and now you might as well come below, and we'll have a yarn over a pipe and a mug of old Jamaica."

In the course of the conversation that ensued over these

convivial auxiliaries, the Captain bethought him to enquire to what part of the world the *Delilah* would next sail, and then it came out that her first officer did not exactly know. He had understood, however, in a general way, that they were bound for some point on the Spanish main, for a cargo of mahogany. Budlong had made two voyages in the *Delilah* before, one to the Baltic, the other up the Mediterranean; neither had resulted very successfully, and her late commander had resigned, when the barque last arrived in port, after some high words with the owners.

"They ort to gin the command to me," Mr. Budlong observed at this point of his communication, "and they've promised to next vy'ge, but this time a feller goes as skipper who knows about this mahogany business. Ain't clapped eyes on him yet, but I've had orders to pick up half a dozen taut lads with natral gumption, or built to stand wear and tear, who will sign articles for two years."

"Ain't that kind of queer?"

"Well, yes, considerable that way, but there's many things as happens all the time that's queer. Fill your glass, Hornfager, and give us a toast."

CHAPTER IV.

There was consternation at the Wayne residence when it was known that our incorrigible Steve had levanted, and consternation was supplemented by indignant wrath when it was discovered that he had gone off with Prometheus Stebbins, the most hopelessly black sheep in the neighborhood, whose smutty fleece could hardly, in the estimation of good, respectable people, be washed clean by any process.

It's a sad thing to wander from the well-defined highway of propriety; but when one goes astray with a person of no social status at his heels the case is pretty nearly hopeless.

If you must sin, brother, do so decorously and in good company. If secretly conscious of an overweening propensity to steal, for instance, do not pick pockets on the street, or empty the tills of hucksters' shops, but secure a position as a bank cashier, or, better still, get elected to your Board of Aldermen, or to Congress, where your proclivities can be safely indulged in until circumstances render a flight to Canada advisable, where very good society will open its doors to you. If you have a depraved appetite for intoxicating beverages, do not visit Mr. Swig's saloon and guzzle beer with the shabby crowd that haunts the place, but obtain an invitation to Senator Wind's state dinner, where you may be served with wine and whisky-punch; where Dr. Adamant, who sits opposite to you, will not shake his head disapprovingly, and very likely, just for once in a way, will suffer his own glass to be filled when the Hon. Mr. Boodler proposes the health of the senatorial host in a bumper.

In what direction the boy had gone and what action should be taken in order to bring him back to the paternal roof and salutary punishment were questions that no two members of the domestic sanhedrim exactly agreed upon, and some time was lost in acrimonious discussion.

Mrs. Wayne, rendered clairvoyant by the unerring instincts of motherhood, was sure the son who was the pride of her heart and the sorrow of her existence had hastened toward the seaboard, and besought the Elder to journey thitherward, for peradventure he might arrive in time to prevent the precious prodigal from venturing off to certain destruction in the great deep.

But the Elder would not be entreated; he did not think the boy had pluck enough to set off upon any really adventurous quest. He fancied he was playing at Robinson Crusoe not far away and would return properly crestfallen when the supply of edibles he had taken with him was exhausted.

Dr. Adamant, who invited himself to preside as Moderator

at the family council, entertained exceedingly gloomy views. "This child, whom we had the right to suppose one of the elect," he said, "has acquired, as we have recently learned, frightfully intemperate habits. Sister Snoop remarked to me this morning that he had probably not been strictly sober in a year."

"Then Sister Snoop has uttered a wicked, malicious falsehood!" Mrs. Wayne cried, her face aflame.

"A moment's reflection will, I'm sure, convince you, Sister Wayne, that your remark concerning one of the mothers in Israel did not savor of Christian charity."

"And what did her remark about Steve savor of, I should like to know?" the mother tartly rejoined.

"That is entirely beside the question, my dear madam, and the query evinces an illogical mind. Few females, I may add, possess logical minds; hence St. Paul's injunction that they should be subject to their husbands. But, to proceed: You must admit, firstly, that this child of the covenant, as we believed him to be, has turned out a child of wrath; he was discovered, a short time since, recovering from a drunken carousal"—

"And because of that one transgression people say he has not been sober for a year! Is that Christian charity, Dr. Adamant? Is that doing as we would be done by?"

"If you would only allow me to proceed logically, Mrs. Wayne—I was about to remark that, having learned that a child of wrath had been detected in one drunken debauch, we observe, secondly, that there are the best of reasons for supposing that he has indulged in other drunken debauches, that he habitually indulges in them. For are we not by nature prone to evil and desperately wicked? Hence we infer that the statement of Sister Snoop, while susceptible, perhaps, of a wider, a broader, a more extended signification than the mere naked facts would seem to justify, is, after all, correct in spirit"—

"It was a wicked slander, a willful lie," Mrs. Wayne broke in, "uttered to gratify an inordinate love of tattling and to blacken the character of a boy who had never injured the slanderer and liar."

Having thus freed her mind, which was somewhat passion-tossed, Mrs. Wayne marched out of the room, with flashing eyes and head erect, looking very maternal and defiant.

Dr. Adamant wiped his face with a bandana handkerchief and appeared to feel, upon the whole, relieved that the lady had taken herself off. No dignity of manner or office could maintain itself against interruptions in a prearranged line of argument, and, besides, he had been growing apprehensive for some moments that this lioness fighting for her cub might turn and rend his logic to tatters—as indeed she had. Further danger in that direction was happily averted, and he turned, with a large accession of confidence, to the Elder.

"I was upon the point of observing, Brother Wayne," he went on, "when your excellent wife abruptly left us, that inasmuch as the statement of Sister Snoop was accurate in spirit, that, thirdly, it is not improbable your misguided son has become an hireling in some bar-room, where the opportunity to gratify his depraved taste may be ever present. Let the taverns round about be searched, and peradventure the prodigal will be found filling his belly with the husks that belong to swine."

"It will not be worth while to look for Stephen in any place of that description," the Elder said, rising; "and you may as well mention to Mrs. Snoop, if you have an opportunity, that her statement in regard to his intemperate habits is quite wide of the truth."

"It is natural for earthly parents to endeavor to shield their erring offspring from the consequences of their transgressions; but take heed, Elder Wayne, take heed that you do not become a partner of evil-doers by striving to cover up evil-doing."

"Thanks. I'll bear the suggestion in mind, sir," the Elder said, with an air of stiffness which he could assume when occasion required, and then the good clergyman found himself bowed politely out, and went home to pray that this temporarily rebellious member of his flock might be brought to see the error of his ways and perceive that it was his duty to heap disgrace upon the head of his son, who had been detected in a grave fault.

In the meantime the mother had fled to her boy's vacant room and thrown herself weeping upon the floor beside the bed, and there Grandma Wayne found her.

"You need not take on about Steve," the old lady said, "he'll be home, by and by, none the worse for his run."

"But that Snoop woman is talking about him dreadfully, and Dr. Adamant pretends to believe what she says. I sha'n't go to meeting any more if I can help it."

"You are getting round to Steve's way of thinking, and perhaps Dr. Adamant isn't quite a gentleman, notwithstanding his cloth; but we must not let these people raise such a tempest that the boy can't stay when he does come back."

"I'm sure I don't know how we can help it, if the minister and everybody else are going to join in a hue and cry against him."

"I shall have to put my foot down, and let them know I won't have it."

Grandma Wayne did put her foot down with emphasis, but it proved to be a barrier that was altogether inadequate to stop the flow of the vile stream of scandal. The son of a ruling elder had been guilty of a sad indiscretion, and Christian heads wagged dubiously. Every thoughtless prank was remembered against him, and his actual deviations from the path of rectitude were commented upon by censorious tongues until the exemplary multitude settled comfortably down in the belief that he was a monster of juvenile depravity.

The Elder, as we have noticed, was not quite disposed to indorse all the extreme views entertained by the religious society to which he belonged. He regarded his son's offense as a serious one, but he had a notion that the boy should have a chance to amend, if he would; yet how could he ever find heart to try and retrace the wrong steps he had taken, with a whole community howling that he had sinned too deeply for pardon? Had the father followed the dictates of his own heart after the first gust of anger had blown itself out, he would, had opportunity offered, have bidden Steve let by-gones be by-gones, and behave himself for the future, but the Elder was soon made to feel he must *prove* that he held vice in abhorrence, by being very relentless toward his own vicious son.

At last he was badgered into issuing a printed hand-bill, which described the runaway in no very complimentary terms, and warned all persons against harboring him, as a contumacious minor. At the head of the hand-bill was a wood-cut representing a boy of villainous aspect, running at the top of his speed, with a bundle over his shoulder. These bills were posted up in conspicuous places about the township and mailed to postmasters in various parts of the country by the church committee who had taken the matter in charge.

"This will teach the young vagabond in what estimation he is held by God-fearing men and women," Dr. Adamant said, as he perused the document with grim approval.

"It is infamously cruel," was the verdict of his mother and grandmother, and it was remarked that neither of these ladies was seen at church for a long time thereafter.

The hand-bill accomplished something beyond serving as a sweet morsel for the lovers of scandal to roll under their tongues; a copy of it drifted down to Albany and attracted the attention of Captain Hornfager after his return from New York.

He learned from it that his *protégé* was not, as he supposed, an orphan; he inferred that he had been in some serious kind of mischief, also that the fatted calf was not likely to be slain when he returned, if he ever did.

The Captain considered all these things over a mug of rum, and formed a resolution. He determined to visit Steve's home when he journeyed westward, in the capacity of an exceedingly sly detective, to learn what manner of people his family were, what iniquity he had been guilty of, and then either to tell what he knew about him, or keep his own counsel, as in his wisdom should seem best.

CHAPTER V.

The young candidates for seasickness and adventure in foreign parts were taken down to the *Delilah*, according to appointment, to be inspected by Mr. Budlong. Steve at once found favor in the eyes of the good-natured old salt, who liked a bright, frank-spoken boy with a dash of the devil in him, particularly when such a boy had made up his mind to try a bout in the forecabin of a ship, the only proper arena, Mr. Budlong considered, in which faithful ambition could have its first set-to with fortune.

"There's good quarter-deck timber in that younker," the mate found opportunity to say *sub rosa* to Captain Hornfager, "and he won't fist beef or handle a slush-bucket many years, so I tell ye; but that messmate of his'n looks to me as though he wouldn't go in stays. Damme! why didn't the lubber 'list in the marines?"

It must be confessed that the personal appearance of Prometheus was not prepossessing. He was short of stature, but broad-shouldered and muscular as a young bison, which animal, upon the whole, he rather resembled. There was a red birthmark across his snub nose, suggestive of a recent

pugilistic encounter, and he had the air of a lackey who had been lately kicked for attempted insubordination. His little piggish eyes had a cunning gleam, and his stumpy hands looked as though they would instinctively close upon any personal property that could be conveniently carried off.

The antipathy Mr. Budlong conceived for Stebbins junior was so strong that he would have declined to enlist him; but Steve would not go without him, and he had set his heart upon having the latter in his own watch during the next voyage, so that he could teach him to knot ropes, take observations for latitude and longitude, to work a lunar, or keep his approximate position by dead reckoning.

"Well, Hornfager, I'll take 'em," was Mr. Budlong's final decision. "The young commodore will do me credit some of these times; t'other one from your tell will do for cook's mate for a cruise, and mebbby the critter 'ill get washed overboard crossing the Gulf Stream, or the old man may lay him out with a heaver some day. We must hope for the best."

So the boys appended their signatures to the ship's articles and became a part of the *Delilah's* crew; but a week, possibly a longer period, would elapse before the barque would be ready to sail, and Steve was informed that during the interval, provided he reported on board at eight bells every evening and remained until seven bells next morning, he could go where he pleased.

For Prometheus, however, immediate employment was found that occupied the whole of his valuable time. The cabin had to be swept and garnished, the telltale scoured until it shone like a mirror, the brass-work of the capstan and the companion rails polished, Mr. Budlong's stateroom set to rights, and when these things had been satisfactorily attended to, he was furnished with a bucket of sand and a handful of oakum and set to scouring the bow anchor. The latter job bade fair to last indefinitely.

Some of the duties which were assigned to the embryo

cook's mate may strike the reader as works of supererogation; but Mr. Budlong was a strategist. He did not think it becoming that a young fellow, who, as one of his watch would soon be reefing topsails and performing other sailor-like duties, should consort on terms of equality with a chap who was probably destined to end his career in prison or on the gallows; so Steve was left at large, like an A. B. on liberty, while Prometheus was kept menially busy, that he might not detract from the social status of his shipmate, who was young, soft-hearted, and inclined to admit unprofitable associates to a dangerous degree of familiarity.

Steve made good use of his liberty, all things considered; he prowled about the city to a considerable extent, and saw from a safe distance a good deal of queer life; but he carried his mother's miniature in his pocket, and that talisman, assisted by a mother's prayers perhaps, kept him from debasing sin. The boy that had been denounced and prayed at as a hopeless reprobate by so many who belonged to a great Christian church moved safe and uncontaminated through the byways of the metropolitan city of America protected, under Providence, by a mother's picture and a mother's prayers.

Oh, mothers of unruly boys who will not become students of theology and whose proclivities seem altogether sinful to your feminine minds, bind them to you while they are still lisping childish prayers at your knees with such a chain cable of affection as can never after be broken. If you cannot command the artist to preserve your lineaments upon ivory or canvas for them to study when they stray away from you, as in the natural course of events they will, so impress yourselves upon their minds that you will be ever present with them in memory. To identify yourself with their whole existence make them feel by your patience, your sympathy, your prompt mediation when youthful sin has found them out, that a mother's love endures always,

through good report and ill, that it will continue after misfortune and wrong-doing have alienated every other friend; that it will not die when the grave has closed over their unhonored remains, but will follow them across the dark river, away out into the awful confines of eternity.

Steve did not spend all his time in sight-seeing; he appreciated the fact that he was about to start in a new vocation the details of which were as yet a mystery, and that his preliminary education could not be commenced too soon. He had a shrewd notion, also, that his consequence would be increased among his fellows if he quickly gained a knowledge of nautical technicalities, so he devoted several hours every day to catechising Mr. Budlong, who answered all his questions, and volunteered a vast amount of professional information. In a week the boy had learned the names of the different sails and spars, could box the compass, run nimbly over the futtock shrouds into the main-top, and continue on to the royal yard, without becoming dangerously giddy.

"Darn me, but he's a buster, he is," was Mr. Budlong's eulogistic mental comment upon our young friend's aptitude; and we'll be having him strutting round second mate, about second v'yage if there don't nothing nip him in the bud."

The loading of the barque did not appear to progress with much rapidity or system. Now and then a box or bale would be hoisted on board, and occasionally an enormous packing case, said to contain machinery for the steam saw-mill, which was to be erected down among the mahogany trees, arrived on a great four-horse truck, and it was stuck into the hold with all possible despatch.

Two or three swarthy gentlemen, who were understood to be in some way connected with the mahogany business, were always on hand when the big cases arrived, and seemed especially interested in getting them quickly out of sight.

Once or twice a custom-house officer sauntered on board,

took a look round, and asked a few questions. The official never seemed to be exactly suspicious, still it was evident he thought there was something a little mysterious about the craft, and that she would bear watching.

One morning, a wide-awake, breezy young gentleman, with pencil and note-book in his hand, paid the barque a visit, and asked such a string of questions that Mr. Budlong's head began to swim. The breezy gentleman proved to be Mr. Frank Shannahan, a reporter in the employ of the *Daily Cormorant*, an enterprising morning paper, which was fast elbowing its way to the front rank of journalism. Its young representative, who had come to see whither the *Delilah* was going, was a born knight of the pencil, and as a matter of course, had a famous "nose for news." He was as affable as a candidate for Congress, pleasant as a June morning, and as self-possessed, under all circumstances, as the Egyptian Sphynx.

In ten minutes he knew as much as Mr. Budlong did about the *Delilah* and mahogany, in ten minutes more he had established confidential relations with the mate, learned his name and history, taken a glass of grog with him in the cabin, returned the compliment by presenting him with a capital cigar and a ticket to the Bowery theatre, slapped him on the back for a good fellow, told him he ought to be in command of a London packet.

For this free-and-easy individual Steve conceived a strong admiration. He had heard of reporters and daily newspapers, in a general way, but had never before seen a specimen of either. The *Weekly Courier*, published in the village near where he was born, the *New York Observer*, and the *Missionary Herald*, constituted about the only periodical literature with which he had been acquainted, while Mr. Sprawl, an elderly, cross-eyed gentleman who edited the *Weekly Courier*, was the only journalist he had ever encountered.

Mr. Shannahan noticed the boy, as, indeed, he noticed everything within the range of mortal vision, and was rather pleased with him.

"Son of yours, Mr. Budlong?" he asked, with a nod in the lad's direction.

"Well, no; never had no wife, consequently no son. He's a younker, with a good bit of book-larnin', just going on his first v'ye."

"From the country, I see," Mr. Shannahan continued, this time addressing Steve. "Nice place, the country; new milk, fresh eggs, spring chickens, and that sort of thing; monstrous slow, though. Been to school much?"

"I was at the Tadmor academy for six years," our young friend answered, wondering how Mr. Shannahan came to surmise that he was not city-bred.

"One of the best educational institutions in the State. You picked up lots of Latin and Algebra, I'll be sworn, and used to write for the school paper every other week."

"I'm afraid I did not learn as much Latin and Algebra as I ought to, but I know something about them, and I certainly used to write for the school paper. I edited it two or three times."

"Of course you did; you had a composition about Spring, and used to write some verses once in a while. Well, I must be off; but, if you'll come round to the *Cormorant* office to-night about eight o'clock, I'll show you how we make newspapers here. There's my card; enquire at the counting-room, and they will tell you where to find me."

"I shall certainly come if Mr. Budlong has no objections, and I'm much obliged for the invitation."

"My friend Budlong will be glad to have you out of the way one evening, particularly if he is sure, as in this case, that you are in good hands; so sharp eight, remember; and if I keep him all night, Mr. Budlong, I'll see that he's safe back in the morning," and then Mr. Shannahan appeared to

regard the matter as settled, leaped down to the wharf, and walked airily away.

"Cute chap that," the mate said, as he gazed after the retreating figure of his late visitor, "and such a jawing tackle as he's got aboard! The common run of parsons ain't nothing to him. You might as well beat up to his anchorage at eight bells; it won't do no harm, if it don't do no good."

At the appointed hour Steve was at the *Cormorant* office, which he found without difficulty, and was directed to the reporters' room, up three flights of very narrow and very dirty stairs. The apartment was large and well lighted; the floor was littered with newspapers and shreds of manuscript; the furniture was scanty and appeared to have seen hard service. There was one long table, at which several young gentlemen, Mr. Shannahan among them, were busily writing; there was a number of small desks ranged around the walls, at which some rather older gentlemen were at work. Nearly every occupant of the room had a pipe or a cigar in his mouth, and seemed to be combining pleasure with business in a way which was decidedly fascinating to the inexperienced looker-on.

Mr. Shannahan at once recognized his visitor, and came affably forward to meet him.

"You keep time like a chronometer," he said, with an off-hand manner, that at once relieved the country lad of the last vestige of embarrassment, "and time is everything on board ship and in a newspaper office. By the way, I don't think I learned your name while I was on board the *Delilah* to-day, and I want to introduce you to Mr. Claymore, our managing editor."

"My name is Stephen Wayne."

"And a kinsman of Mad Anthony, no doubt, and a worthy representative of a worthy family, I should say. But—the duce take compliments—you came at my invitation to see how a metropolitan newspaper is manufactured, and I'm

going to do my best to show you, if you won't mind going the rounds with me to-night."

"I should very much like to do so, if I would not be troublesome."

"Don't speak of being troublesome. I like to have a young fellow at my elbow, when I'm on a prow, above all things; come along, we can talk as we go, and it is time to toddle. I must be at a political meeting on the Bowery in an hour, and you must take a look over the shop, before we start."

Steve was duly presented to Mr. Claymore, a pleasant-spoken, sharp-eyed gentleman, who looked him through and through at a glance, and said he'd see him later. Then the ex-presiding officer of the "League of Honor" was escorted by his new acquaintance into the press-room, the composing-room, and the other principal departments of the establishment, then out upon the street and into a Broadway stage, by which they journeyed to Canal street.

What a night that was in Steve's experience! He never forgot it, and it influenced his whole after life. He went to the political meeting, where he saw Shannahan occupying a conspicuous seat on the platform, taking down, in shorthand, the words of wisdom which the patriots who wished to save the country from going to perdition by getting into office poured forth. He dropped into a theater, where he saw Edwin Forrest in an act of "The Gladiator," and went away from the play-house trembling with some strange emotion to which he could give no name. Of course, he could give no descriptive name to an enthusiasm he had never before experienced, neither could he have told in words how the sparring match he that night witnessed affected him, or what impression the news picked up at the police headquarters of murders, elopements, and defalcations, made upon his mind. He thought, vaguely, that journalism was a grand profession; that a man who could use a pen deftly, and had a daily newspaper in which to express his views,

was possessed of the true Archimedean lever, with which the social and political world can be moved.

The sensation of the evening came when they were sauntering down the Bowery *en route* for the *Cormorant* office, about eleven o'clock. There was a sudden far-reaching clang of a mighty bell, which seemed to Steve's inexperienced ears like the harbinger of evil tidings. Shannahan was instantly on the alert. A few moments later a gang of apparently half-frantic men, wearing a grotesque uniform, consisting of black trousers, red flannel shirts, and hideous leather helmets, dashed down the center of the street, dragging a fire-engine. They turned down a cross street leading toward East River, with a miscellaneous crowd of citizens trooping behind them. Shannahan and his companion joined in the chase. They soon came up with the engine, which was in position and throwing a stream of water upon the upper part of a great tenement building, seemingly a very hive of humanity. Half-clad men and women were hurrying from the hallways, laden with such poor belongings as they could carry; frightened faces were distinguishable through the smoke at many of the windows. A fiery shower was falling all around, and a pandemonium of discordant sounds appeared to have been inaugurated.

The fire steadily gained headway, in spite of all efforts made to check its progress, and it was soon manifest to those who knew anything about such matters, that the building was doomed. Then the startling intelligence found its way to the minds of all, mysteriously, that a child had been left in an apartment on the third floor to which all access from the inside had been cut off.

Steve felt a thrill of indescribable horror as the dreadful news began to be discussed by those nearest him, but this emotion was quickly merged in a sentiment of admiration for real heroism, as he saw a long ladder elevated against the cracked, tottering wall, and one of the leather-hatted

Bedlamites making his way upward to what seemed certain destruction. It was indeed a desperate venture; the heat was terrific, the smoke almost suffocating, the wall threatened every instant to fall and crush the adventurer; but he moved resolutely up the ladder like the determined leader of a forlorn hope, while a suppressed cheer, which was almost a groan, encouraged him. He reached the window he was aiming for at last, and tore away the sash. A blinding cloud of smoke poured out, and drove him back a step or two, but he advanced again as soon as he could inflate his lungs with one respiration of breathable air, and, after a desperate effort, disappeared through the aperture. He reappeared in a moment, scorched and blackened, with something under his arm, regained the ladder, descended to the ground, handed his burden, which proved to be a wretched-looking little boy, unconscious but still alive, to a bystander, and then dropped on the pavement in a dead faint. Strong arms immediately bore him to the outskirts of the crowd; then, with a great crash, the walls collapsed, and the tenement house was a heap of smoldering ruins.

"Sikesy had a close call that time," Shannahan said, nonchalantly, "a minute more he and the kid would have been in kingdom come. Well the *fracas* is over, so we will jog along; first form has gone to press, but we can bring in an article about the fire somewhere if we're lively."

"Do accidents of this kind happen very often?" Steve asked, in a voice that was tremulous with excitement.

"Oh, Lord! yes; every day, half a dozen times a day frequently; this little blaze was nothing; and sometimes the kids don't get out alive; then we have a stunning item."

"A what?"

"A stunning item; that is, we throw ourselves on a description of the catastrophe in half a column, first ten lines leaded. By the way, do you think you could write an account of this fire?"

"I'm sure I could. I almost think I could write a poem about it."

"I believe you, by Jove! and you shall try your hand at a prose description if you can write it in time; the *Cormorant* can't stand poetry, though; it's too exhilarating."

"Poetry is not practical enough for a newspaper, I suppose," Steve said, with a curious, half-dazed expression on his face; "and yet, I believe it tells what people think in fewest words."

"Very likely, sonny; but, when it comes to telling what people *see*, prose, and pretty terse prose, is the thing. You just dish up the facts about that fire in the best plain English you can command, and we'll see what can be done with it."

"I will," the youngster said, so seriously that Shannahan nearly burst out laughing; and then not much more was spoken until the two were back in the reporters' room.

Shannahan found a place for our young friend at the long table, gave him a package of plain paper, a pencil, and a few technical instructions, after which he left him to his own devices, and set about getting up his own copy.

Steve's pencil flew; the journalistic inspiration was upon him, and it seemed to him that he could not form the written characters fast enough to express the ideas that came with a rush to his mind. In half an hour he had a considerable pile of small sheets, written according to instructions, on one side at his elbow, and his report was finished. Then Mr. Claymore sauntered down that way, picked up the manuscript, glanced at it, crushed it into an elongated wad, and dropped it into a little tin box, which immediately disappeared through an aperture in the ceiling.

"We might as well go and get our coffee and cakes; revised proof will be down by the time we return," Mr. Shannahan said, a little later, when some manuscript he had been preparing had been duly consigned to the tin receptacle.

Steve did not very well understand what "proof" meant,

but coffee and cakes had an intelligent meaning; he was outrageously hungry, moreover, and therefore glad to follow Shannahan into an underground retreat, where he found half a hundred men and boys seated at unpretending tables, imbibing coffee and devouring little buttered biscuits, with unmistakable gusto. Some other viands were served in this subterranean restaurant; there was an enormous round of beef on the counter, flanked by a boiled ham, stuck full of cloves, while near at hand were some rather dubious-looking pies. The coffee and cakes, however, seemed to be the popular parts of the *menu*, and to these the majority of the patrons of the place confined themselves.

Steve was disposed to go with the multitude, and would have been quite content with the leading items on the bill of fare, but Mr. Shannahan was luxuriously disposed; he ordered pork and beans, a box of sardines, and a bottle of Scotch ale.

Pork and beans suited the rural tastes of our young friend; the sardines, notwithstanding Mr. Shannahan's explanation, he believed to be little fresh-water fish preserved in lamp-oil, and a very disagreeable article of diet; the ale he declined, because of his mother's known aversion to anything in a bottle unless it came from the responsible hands of Doctor Graves, who escorted people in good social position down into the Valley of the Shadow of Death, *secundem artem*.

When the midnight repast was concluded Mr. Shannahan led the way back to the reporters' room, and there on the big table Steve found a long, narrow strip of paper, printed on one side, a "galley proof" in fine, and it contained, among other things, his first contribution to the press.

If my readers can recall with what emotions they beheld their own first proof-slip, they will know exactly how he felt; and to those who have never had such an experience, I can not very well describe his feelings. His rather gushing

account of the fire and the heroic conduct of the firemen had a new dignity, not to say beauty, when he saw it in type; he thought he would like to send a copy of the *Cormorant* in which it appeared to his mother, with a note of explanation, for she could scarcely be otherwise than proud to learn that her son was a newspaper writer, and if she should happen to believe that he was destined to become a famous journalist she might not feel so very badly over his disinclination to fit himself for the gospel ministry.

But it was not quite prudent to communicate with the home government just then; so the runaway amused himself by building some modest aerial castles which were pretty to look at, and would occasion no disastrous crash if they tumbled to the ground, as that description of edifices is so apt to do.

Steve half thought he would rather be a newspaper man than a sailor; but it was well enough to be certain which vocation had the most attractions; besides, he had promised to sail on the *Delilah*, and had no notion of backing out of an engagement fairly entered into.

"I will go this voyage," he said to himself, "and then, if I don't like sailing, I'll ask Mr. Shannahan to get me into a newspaper office."

He had just reached this conclusion when Mr. Claymore, having apparently completed his night's work, came up, with a freshly-filled pipe in his mouth and a pleasant smile on his face.

"You are off to sea in a few days on a ship in the mahogany trade, I understand," the managing editor said.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, the voyage will be an interesting one, and will probably afford you an opportunity for seeing something of the tropics. By the way, if anything of interest happens, send us a letter from the first port you reach, and we will

try and find a place for it in the *Cormorant*. If we publish your letter we shall pay for it, of course."

Steve's eyes sparkled.

"I see the proposition suits you, Wayne; so I am going to say a little more, which you must consider confidential for the present. In the first place, though, I may as well tell you that you made a very clever report of the fire, and I see nothing to prevent your becoming a good newspaper writer, with care and practice. It is the kind of work, too, that I think will suit you better than sea-going, in the long run."

"I believe I should like to be a reporter, above all things, sir, but I have promised to go with Mr. Budlong, and go I must, of course."

"To be sure; and now comes the confidential part of what I was going to say. I happen to want a reporter on Mr. Budlong's ship. You look surprised; so I must explain that newspapers have reporters or correspondents in all sorts of queer places, who write for the journal that employs them regularly, or when they can get a chance and have any news worth relating. I have some reasons for suspecting that the *Delilah* is not going after mahogany, exactly; to be plain about it, I think she is going on an unlawful voyage of some kind. Go with her, just as you intended, but keep your eyes open, and as soon as you get within reach of a post office write me where you have been and what the vessel has been doing. Do you understand?"

"I think I understand, sir, and I should like to write letters or anything I could for the *Cormorant*, but I might get into trouble if I went on an unlawful voyage, and I should not like to be anything like a spy."

"I should not ask you to be anything like a spy, Wayne, or to run into any danger, but Mr. Budlong, who is an honest fellow, will see that neither of you get into any serious trouble. If you have any scruples about the propriety of

writing, take Budlong's advice when the time comes to prepare your letter, but until then say nothing of what I have told you to anyone, except Mr. Shannahan, who knows all about it. Talk with him if you like."

"I will talk with him and tell him my decision when I am sure what I ought to do."

"Very well; but remember that I fully trust to your discretion and secresy. Good night."

Then Mr. Claymore went out, and Steve fell into a brown study, and from a brown study, dozed off to sleep, with his head on the table. An hour later Mr. Shannahan, whose work had detained him after the other members of the force had gone, roused him and took him to his own lodgings, on Greenwich street.

CHAPTER VI.

"You know what Mr. Claymore wishes me to do?" Steve said to Shannahan, while they were at breakfast the next morning.

"Oh, yes, I took you out last night and set you at work writing up the fire to see whether you could fill the bill or not."

"I thank you, for I think you intended kindly. Now, Mr. Shannahan, tell me, if I were your particular friend, your brother, for instance, would you advise me to accept Mr. Claymore's proposal?"

"Most assuredly, Wayne; but I think all the better of you for asking just that question, in just that way. It shows you're a gentleman in feeling, and would not like to do anything unbecoming a gentleman. Now here are the facts of the case in a nutshell: Our manager fancies your *Delilah* stands a chance of meeting with some adventures on her con-

templated voyage, in which the public will be interested, so he would like to have a correspondent on board to report what happens. I paid her a visit yesterday, intending to secure a passage in some way—ship before the mast, if I could do no better—but I saw you and learned you were going; you looked to me like a bright young fellow who could do what was wanted, so I invited you up to the office for Mr. Claymore's inspection."

"What kind of adventures do you expect the ship to meet with? Mr. Claymore appeared to think she was not going on a lawful voyage."

"It isn't best to put one's suspicions into plain English, Wayne, and it's none of your business, anyway, what she's up to. You shipped in good faith; so did Budlong and the others. Perhaps she really is going after mahogany and is loaded with machinery for a saw-mill. If so, all right, and you can spin us a yarn about your cruise at leisure intervals, and if she does happen to go into some other line of business, let us know about that when you have an opportunity."

"Wouldn't this be like—well, like telling tales out of school?"

"Not a bit of it. If the *Delilah* is going on an honest errand, there can be no impropriety in any sailor or officer on board writing an account of the journey for a newspaper. If she's bound upon an unlawful expedition, neither you nor anyone else who was intentionally deceived in regard to the matter is under any obligation to keep the secret."

"You're right, Mr. Shannahan, and I'm going to do as you advise."

"Glad to hear it, for this may open a way to something better than going to sea before the mast or on the quarter-deck, either. Going to sea is not a bad business if a fellow is sharp, minds what he's about, and keeps straight; but there is no field like journalism for those who have a gift that way, as I believe you have. Now I must go to the office, and it's

time for you to report on board ship. Keep what you have learned to yourself; come round every evening while you're in port, if you can, and I'll find some kind of exercise for your pencil."

Our young friend went back to the *Delilah*, very much elated with the prospect which had opened before him. He was engaged to write for a newspaper; he belonged to the great establishment he had recently visited; he was the professional comrade of Claymore, Shannahan, and the rest of that intellectual company to which he had been introduced and for which he entertained such a sincere admiration. It was not surprising that some visions of glory, soon to be achieved in the arena where the pen and pencil are employed as weapons instead of the musket and saber for offense or self-protection, flashed through his mind, or that he foresaw a time, not so very far away, when he could return to the paternal roof with honor and be received with a flourish of trumpets.

We can all paint these fancy sketches with astonishing facility while imagination is active, the pulse high, the blood bounding; but before many decades have been lived out imagination will begin to falter, the hand that the Angel of Hope still strives to guide will be often paralyzed by the Demon of Disappointment. Gradually we cease attempting to portray bright skies, open hills, and still, shining waters, and at last, weary and disheartened, we paint sombre pictures, with a ruined, lichen-covered tower, over which a vulture wheels, in the foreground, and bleak, desolate mountains, half shadowed in the gloom of a gathering tempest, in the distance.

The uneasiness Steve had felt when he first learned that the *Delilah* might possibly be bound on an expedition discountenanced by law soon wore off. He had a wholesome dread of doing anything that would render him liable to a criminal prosecution; but if the owners or commander of a

vessel were not so scrupulous, it was no affair of his, as Shannahan had argued. He could not, or, at least, should not, be made to suffer for another's transgressions; he did not propose to take part, knowingly, in any unlawful enterprise; but he at last came to the conclusion that it would, upon the whole, be rather lucky for him if the barque should be transformed into a pirate, a smuggler, or something else atrocious, after she was fairly at sea, for, in that event, he would have such grand material for a sensational letter to the *Cormorant*.

Of course, the young fellow had expended some of his few remaining coppers in purchasing a copy of the journal containing his report of the fire, and equally, of course, he could not resist the temptation of showing it to Mr. Budlong. Very greatly, too, that by no means very remarkable production advanced him in the estimation of the worthy mate, who asked him a multitude of questions concerning his night's adventures, and was satisfied from his answers—although the boy did not brag much—that the newspaper people had discovered, as he himself had done, what a genius his favorite was.

"That's as good as a page out of a novil," Mr. Budlong observed, sagely, "and it ain't nowise unsailorlike to do this sort of thing when you're off duty. You'd better be cruisin' round with a gentlemanlike chap than standin' off and on among the bar-rooms; but you don't want to forget, all the same, that you're after a place on the quarter-deck, and there's the ropes to l'arn afore you can git that in a straight-for'a'd way."

Steve understood the admonition intended to be conveyed, and governed himself accordingly. During the day he devoted his time to extending his nautical knowledge, and earnestly strove to familiarize himself with a sailor's duties, so far as that could be done while the vessel was lying at the wharf; but at night he roamed the city with Shannahan,

gaining considerable insight into the routine business of a reporter and some experience in newspaper writing.

In this manner a week passed, and then it was announced that the *Delilah* would positively sail within the next eight-and-forty hours. The final preparations were hurriedly made; all one day stores were arriving in a continuous stream, and a gang of stevedores was kept busy getting them below decks. Toward evening half a dozen of the ponderous cases appeared, and with them the swarthy gentlemen who lent a hand in hoisting them on board. The custom-house officer came down to the wharf once or twice in the course of the day, and seemed to be interested in what was going on, but not suspiciously so. At his last visit he examined somewhat critically one of the great cases, but it bore the brand of a well-known machinery manufactory, and that appeared to satisfy him; anyhow, he went off, and was seen no more.

"I wonder what that critter is nosin' round for," Mr. Budlong said, with a sniff of offended dignity, when the official had departed for the last time; "he ain't so precious green as to conjecter we're tryin' to smuggle things out of port, is he?"

"It's merely impertinent curiosity," said one of the swarthy gentlemen, speaking with a strong foreign accent. "But he's welcome quite to use his eyes or his nose, Señor Budlong; he can go along with us, if he likes, and see that we no mischief do."

"He might help the cook's mate to scour the anchor, mebby; I don't think of nothin' else the lubber would be good for," growled Budlong.

The most exemplary sailor known who ever set foot on a ratlin has an inherent propensity for smuggling. It is a matter of conscience with him to convey on shore a few pounds of tobacco, a case of spirits, or an honest-looking sea chest filled with some valuable merchandise, at every port he makes, and the penny thus turned has a peculiar

value in his estimation. It follows, therefore, that custom-house officers are detested by the sons of Neptune, and are spoken of by them in terms of derision.

When Steve was about to go on shore that night Mr. Budlong informed him that the barque would haul out into the stream at daylight, so he must be on board betimes. The youngster promised to return as directed, and then, with rather a heavy heart, went to make his last reportorial round, at least for a season.

Shannahan was especially kind to him on this occasion; he hurried through with his work, and then devoted the rest of the evening to pleasure. He took the young fellow to see Forrest, and, after the play was over, to a stylish restaurant, where a good supper was served, embracing a number of French dishes, which Steve had never heard of before, and did not particularly relish; then they went back to the *Cormorant* office, where the budding journalist had an interview with Mr. Claymore, who gave him some concise final instructions. The managing editor roused his curiosity to a tremendous pitch, by confiding to him a sealed letter which was only to be opened should circumstances oblige him to abandon his ship.

"If you have to cut the acquaintance of the *Delilah*, Wayne, this letter will tell you just how to proceed, but if you remain with the ship you will not require such instructions, and in that event bring it back to me sealed as it now is, when you return."

Claymore also furnished him with a package of foreign correspondence paper, a neat pocket ink-stand and a gold pen. "There are your tools," he said, "and I should not wonder if you have a chance to use them before long. Take care of yourself. When you have any news send it by first mail. Good bye."

"Good bye, sir," Steve answered, with an unjournalistic inclination to sob, and then he went down the dark, narrow

stairs he had learned to like, out upon the almost-deserted streets, which had never looked quite so dreary before, down to East River, and on board the *Delilah*, where everything was astir, notwithstanding the late, or rather the early, hour, it being about one o'clock A. M.

"Just in the nick of time," Mr. Budlong said, as he came over the side, "we're haulin' out a good bit sooner than I expected, and I was amazin' 'fraid you'd get left; but an inch is as good as a mile in this 'ere case." He was indeed, just in the nick of time, for he had scarcely deposited his writing materials and the mysterious letter in his new sea chest, when the gang-plank was hauled in-board, the hawsers cast off, and the barque swung slowly from her moorings. A steam-tug was waiting close at hand to take her in tow, and in a few moments they were gliding down East River.

At three o'clock the *Delilah's* sails began to fill with a gentle off-shore breeze that was rising; the steam-tug stopped her engines and cast off the hawser connecting her with the barque. The pilot descended into his gig, which was towing astern, wished them good-bye and a pleasant voyage, some additional canvas was set, and away went the outgoing vessel seaward on her own hook.

"As you's remarking to the boy a while ago, Señor Budlong, an inch is as good as a mile," one of the swarthy gentlemen observed, complacently, as the barque began to gather headway. "We are in the luck so far—all sail crowd on and a good offing make as soon as possible;" and then the swarthy gentleman disappeared down the companion-way.

When the pilot left the *Delilah* that morning he carried with him a rather bulky letter and a copy of the *Cormorant*. They were addressed to Mr. Wayne, and were duly deposited in the New York post office when the pilot went on shore.

CHAPTER VII.

In the due course of events Captain Hornfager's clipper, the *H. Clay* reached Tadmore, the chief village of the township in which our vagabond was born, and where he had left an unsavory reputation, which, if it did not exactly smell to Heaven, like the offense of Hamlet, was ever present in the nostrils of Dr. Adamant's parishioners.

The worthy boatman was fully resolved upon doing a little detective business; he felt as "sly" as did ever Major Bagstock, and entirely competent to get at the bottom of any mystery. He did not reach this acme of self-confidence until the boat had been tied up and he was arrayed in his "Sunday suit"—so-called, probably, because he never wore it on the first day of the week. The garments had done duty at the honest man's nuptials five-and-twenty years before, consequently they were somewhat *passé* in style, but they were still glossy and exceedingly becoming in the estimation of the owner and of his spouse likewise, although "Cynthy Ann" had once hinted that the tails of his blue coat were disproportionately long, also, that his bell-crowned hat did not have a jaunty appearance.

But the Captain had no more doubt as to the correctness of his attire than of his ability as a detective; so, after a few parting injunctions to "Cynthy Ann," he set out on his tour of discovery.

There was no difficulty in obtaining information concerning Elder Wayne; everyone in Tadmore knew him, and everyone spoke of him in complimentary terms.

"He's one of our best citizens and the leading man in the church," was the substance of the general verdict, and the general verdict, for a wonder, was a just one.

In reality, this world of ours is full of tolerably good people; but one would be hardly inclined to believe so after making inquiries in almost any community concerning almost any prominent individual. The inquirer will be told that "Jones" is a good fellow, but has a weakness for giving short measures and light weights at his store counter; that "Smith" is a whole-souled, generous creature, but alas! he frequents Mr. Swig's saloon; that "Brown" is an enterprising business man, but that his wife is dreadfully jealous of him; and that "Robinson," the head and front of every public enterprise, is said to have left Bangor, Me., between two days.

But Elder Wayne was one of those of whom all persons spoke well, without any damnatory addenda; he was one of the very few who could pass where that loathsome viper SCANDAL lies coiled, without feeling its venomous fangs. It is not always the wisest or the most exemplary who can thus escape scatheless; at least He of Nazareth could not; but they who have the suave amiability that will protect them against the attacks of the detestable reptile above-mentioned, have reason to thank God for His infinite goodness, no matter what other faculties they may lack, no matter how little of this world's goods or honors they may succeed in acquiring.

Nearly everyone whom Captain Hornfager casually interviewed concerning Elder Wayne volunteered a little information about Elder Wayne's son. All agreed that Steve was a young reprobate, who had nearly broken the hearts of his good parents by a vicious life and depraved associations. When Hornfager asked for particulars he was told that the precocious sinner had been a confirmed drunkard almost from the cradle and had led most of the boys of Mr. Walworth's academy to the confines of perdition by his satanic influence.

After hearing this much, Captain Hornfager determined to see Mr. Walworth and learn what he had to say about the

juvenile Ishmaelite. He was feeling "dev-il-ish sly," as the excellent Major Bagstock was wont to remark explanatory of his own state of mind, so he boldly invented a son, Moses by name, and paid his respects to Mr. Walworth for the ostensible purpose of securing for this supposititious youth an opportunity of refreshing himself at the spring of learning over which the celebrated instructor presided.

The gentleman was quite willing to accept another pupil, and this matter of business having been satisfactorily adjusted, some general conversation ensued, in the course of which the Captain managed, with excessive "slyness," to introduce a question relative to Steve and his character.

"Do you know young Wayne?" the pedagogue asked, brightening. "Promising boy, very promising; he was with me six years; a little wild, as smart boys are apt to be, and into all sorts of mischief; but quite a philosopher in his way. He did not pay the best of attention to his books, but somehow managed to *think out* more than most lads *study out*. His people drove him with rather a tight rein, perhaps, and he ran off; more's the pity. Where did you meet him?"

"I seen a handbill describin' him as a runaway," the Captain said, evasively.

"Oh! yes; I know all about that, too; a most injudicious thing. I wonder what his father could have been thinking of when he allowed it to be printed and circulated. Wayne and some other lads got tipsy—a disgraceful performance enough—and the good people hereabouts took it up, instead of leaving me to deal with the young rascal, as I very well knew how to do; because I remember when I was a young rascal myself. There was a tremendous rumpus. Wayne got an awful flogging at home, I am told; and then away he went, as might have been expected."

"Then, you don't think he was a bad sort of chap,"

queried the Captain, with an abortive attempt to appear disinterested.

"Not at all," Mr. Walworth said, emphatically; then a new light appeared to dawn suddenly upon him, and he added, with a significant glance at his companion, "but I'll tell you what, Captain Hornfager, if I knew anything about the boy; if, for instance, he had traveled with me on my canal-boat and I had taken a fancy to him, and tried to help him along, and then went to his old teacher to inquire about him, I would do a little more. I would see his mother, and, so far as possible, relieve her anxiety about him."

The Captain's jaw fell, and a look of blank consternation appeared on his countenance.

"What do you mean?" he at last managed to stammer.

"Only this, Captain, that I was for the moment imposed upon by your ingenious fiction. I quite believe you're the commander of a canal-boat, as you said, but you've no son Moses; or if you have, you don't want to get him into my academy. You've seen Stephen Wayne since he left home; most likely took him away; he has told you more or less of his story; you befriended him, like the good-natured fellow you are, and are here to learn whether he was the kind of boy who ought to have been befriended."

"That shows the valu' of larnin'," the Captain said, while he wiped the perspiration from his heated forehead; "but I don't see how on 'airth you do it, Mr. Walworth."

"How I do what?"

"Why, find out what is passing in the secret groves, so to speak, of a fellow's mind."

"Oh, that's easy enough, when a fellow allows what is passing in his mind to be very legibly reflected in his face. But never mind these little mysteries; please see his mother without delay, and, if you can, relieve her anxiety."

By this time, the Captain had nearly parted with his

senses, in view of Mr. Walworth's unaccountable, not to say awful, prescience, but he managed to articulate, "Jess so, sir; jess so."

"She has been almost distracted, and——; but I'll tell you what to do, Captain: Remain with me to-night, and to-morrow I will make an excuse to send for Mrs. Wayne. Tell her everything you can, which a mother ought to know; and, in the mean time, understand, I am as much interested in this boy as you can possibly be."

"Jess so," the Captain again contrived to repeat, as he looked helplessly round, "I see the p'int, sir; I see the p'int."

Mr. Walworth took care of the Captain that night, and, in the morning persuaded his spouse to send a message to Mrs. Wayne, requesting the pleasure of her company at dinner.

Such an invitation in the rural districts, at that time, meant that the recipient, if the invitation was accepted, was expected to put in an appearance any time after ten o'clock A. M., and remain to partake of the repast served at high noon, or thereabouts.

Mrs. Wayne was glad to go, for her heart was heavy, and anything that would help divert her thoughts from her bitter sorrow was a godsend. So, in due time, she walked into Mrs. Walworth's parlor, and was made acquainted with Captain Hornfager. That gentleman was greatly impressed with this soft-voiced lady, in rustling silk and fleecy lace, with the complexion of a healthy school-girl, the manners of a queen—if a queen happens to be well-bred.

"I think our friend here can tell you something about your son, Mrs. Wayne," Mr. Walworth said, after a few commonplace remarks had been exchanged, concerning the weather, the crops, and the religious condition of the community.

The lady started, and all the color faded from her cheeks.

"Don't be alarmed, ma'am," the Captain made haste to

say, "because it's all right, ma'am, and the boy is quite well and has gone to sea, ma'am, with my old friend Budlong, an honest man, ma'am, who'll look arter him in furrin parts as though he was his own flesh and blood."

To this rather incoherent communication the mother could make no reply. She bowed her head and gave way to a fit of almost hysterical weeping, which told more eloquently than any words could have done how ardently she had loved her wayward child.

The Captain's native good sense admonished him to say no more until the lady had ceased to sob and could listen quietly. Then he told her in his own rude, straightforward fashion all that he knew of her darling black sheep; how his wife had coveted him for her own; how he had gone to New York with him to see that he shipped on a vessel where he would be likely to have good treatment when it became manifest that he was determined upon going to sea.

"I'm sure you've been most kind," Mrs. Wayne said; "Steve has written me of all you have done for him. He was greatly obliged to you, and so am I. I hope that this Mr. Budlong, with whom he has gone, is a God-fearing man, sir."

"Oh, I should say! There wasn't any doubt about that, ma'am. Budlong ain't an Elder in the meeting, like your husband, but he's natur'ly steady; and besides, his first name is Jerubdiah, an awful name, ma'am, such as pious parents give a baby to kind of wean him from the world, you know."

Mrs. Wayne could not help but smile, notwithstanding her sorrow-laden heart, and the Captain, interpreting this as an indication that his conversation was interesting, went on.

"There's a powerful sight of saving grace in a name, when you come to think on it, ma'am. Now my name is 'Sam'-well; anybody might be named Sam'-well; that is, anybody that ain't a lady or a gal; and it wouldn't make no great difference with 'em, but a chap as was called 'Jerubdiah,'

or 'Ebenezer,' or 'Bildad,' from the cradle, would, from the natur' of things, have solemn thoughts; he wouldn't feel like jining a circus, or tendin' bar, or cuttin' up; he'd know he orter grow up a deacon, or something, and carry a blue umbrella and a yaller pocket-handkercher."

"But your friend Budlong didn't turn out a deacon," Mr. Walworth said, laughing.

"Well, not exactly, though mates is a sort of sea-deacons; they ain't like land deacons, of course, because they have to swear some in heavy weather, or when the men don't jump at the word. Not that Budlong is a feller to go cussin' round, unless it was blowin' a gale or the watch didn't turn out sharp at eight bells."

The amused look vanished from Mrs. Wayne's face, and was succeeded by an expression akin to horror. That men should, under any circumstances, use profane language, seemed to this pure-minded Christian woman a grievous sin, and that they should do so when God was speaking in the thunder of the tempest was a height of daring wickedness she could not comprehend.

"I fear my son is in terrible company," she said, rising, in a flutter of apprehension. "How could you leave him where he would hear God's holy name blasphemed in the presence of awful peril?"

It was the Captain's turn to be horrified, and it was fully a minute before it dawned upon him that he had not chosen the happiest way of eulogizing the absent Budlong, but he quickly recovered his mental equipoise.

"I know swearin' is contrary to Scriptur,' and displeasin' to ladies," he said; "seafarin' men and boatmen most all do swear, more shame to 'em, but they wouldn't lie about a boy, as everybody I've talked to here, exceptin' Mr. Walworth, has lied about your boy to me ever since I tied up yesterday, though they don't use cuss words."

"Well put, Captain, very well put, indeed," Mr. Walworth

cried, "Steve has been lied about, Mrs. Wayne, by people who pretend to be Christians; I am sorry he ran away, but I believe he's better off where he is than in this community where almost every one appears anxious to blacken his character. If Steve is ever ruined it will be because these Christian pagans, who should have been his best friends, were his worst enemies, making crimes out of follies and felonies out of boyish indiscretions."

"Mr. Walworth has shown me that I was wrong, Captain, and I must ask you to pardon me for speaking before I had taken due thought," Mrs. Wayne said. "I should like, if I might, to call upon your wife, and thank her for being kind to my boy."

"You may see her easy enough, ma'am, if you don't mind going aboard the *H. Clay*; that's my boat; and Cynthia Ann, that's my wife, would be proud to see you. She's awful homely, Cynthia Ann is; about the homeliest woman that ever lived, I should say; but she's a good-natur'd critter, and sot lots of store by Steve."

"I shall call upon her immediately after dinner, if I may trouble you to go with me, Captain;" and then Mrs. Wayne left the room, after sending a telegraphic glance to Mrs. Walworth, who followed her out.

When the midday meal was concluded, Mrs. Wayne went down to the *H. Clay*, under the escort of the worthy boatman; and in the little close after-cabin, with its cooking stove and dresser crowded into an area about a quarter as large as her own bedroom at home, she found "Cynthia Ann," in a soiled, checked apron, and dreadfully embarrassed when she discovered what manner of visitor had invaded her realm.

The Captain took himself off as soon as the necessary words of introduction had been spoken, and very soon thereafter the cultivated lady and the ignorant boatman's wife were upon confidential terms. There was a bond of

sympathy between them; the scapegrace boy, who belonged to the one and was coveted by the other, drew them together, in spite of all incongruities of education, taste, and social status, and made them loving friends.

Mothers can imagine how those next two hours were passed; how those women extolled the virtues of the wanderer, and found excuses for his shortcomings; how they magnified the one talent he possessed, and supplied him from their feminine love with ten other talents; how they wept over him and praised him; and how they finally knelt down together, while the mother prayed in a tremulous voice, but with sublime faith, that God would protect the child of His handmaiden while tossing upon the great ocean.

When Mrs. Wayne at last departed, a pretty amethyst ring, which she had worn for many years, lay in the brown palm of Mrs. Hornfager. It would not go over the work-enlarged joint of either finger; but "Cynthy Ann" thought it a beautiful jewel, and consigned it for safe keeping to the little box wherein lay her marriage certificate, her wedding gloves of white lisle thread, and some withered clover blossoms that "Samwell" had given her in the days of their courtship.

CHAPTER VIII.

The *Delilah* made a good offing the night she slipped out of port, and the next morning was in blue water, headed for the Windward Passage, carrying top-gallant-stun'-sails, and going like a race horse. She was a splendid sailer, and one of the swarthy gentlemen—who by this time had come to be known to the crew, as Captain Romeroz, their commander—seemed to be more than well pleased with her performance, as he paced the quarter-deck, stopping occasionally to notice how the sails drew, or to sweep the horizon with his glass.

There were several other swarthy gentlemen on board, but they did not appear to hold any official position, although they lounged about the quarter-deck, smoking cigars, and addressed Captain Romeroz with the freedom of familiar acquaintances. All of them wore natty caps with gold bands, and their costumes were characterized by a good deal of careless elegance, which was in keeping with their manners. The second-mate was a taciturn Englishman, Cradmore by name. The crew was made up of representatives of several nationalities, Scandinavians predominating, and as exceptionally large, for a merchantman. There was a number of boys besides our young friend, ranging in age from twelve to eighteen. The majority of these were manifestly street arabs, and preternaturally vicious, to judge from their physiognomies, but one or two had a faint flavor of the barn-yard about them, and contemplated their new surroundings with open-eyed wonder.

As soon as breakfast had been disposed of, all hands were mustered, to be drafted into the regular watches. Mr. Budlong chose Steve, greatly to the satisfaction of the latter, who already looked upon the mate as a personal friend, and he was not, moreover, greatly prepossessed with the visage of Mr. Cradmore, of the starboard watch.

Prometheus attended this review, with the rest of the ship's company, but was not in demand. Neither officer appeared to wish to undertake the responsibility of his nautical education, but Dr. Duff, the cook, made a bid for him, so he was formally assigned to duty in the galley, where he was content to be located, by the way, for Prometheus was disturbed by no wild dreams of ambition, and furthermore, in the galley toothsome provisions were prepared, which were sometimes purloinable.

Steve soon won some professional honors. He had been among the first aloft when the barque got under way, and had remained aloft, rendering what assistance he could, till

ll the kites were flying, after which he slid to the deck by the wifter, as nonchalantly as an old shellback with barnacles adhering to the transom of his go-ashore trousers. He was little white about the gills when the barque, having got lear of Sandy Hook, began to nod and pitch over the long, eavy swell of the Atlantic. He made one or two hurried ushes to the bulwarks, and gazed down into the great deep or a few moments with other sentiments than those of rapt dmiration; nor did he yearn for salt pork at dinner; but e kept his pins, and thus escaped a deal of cruel chaff hich he would otherwise have had to endure, unless his xperience had varied widely from that of almost every reen hand who has paid tribute to Neptune since the time f Admiral Noah.

"Smartish chap you've got there, Mr. Budlong," Mr. Bradmore said to his superior, when the starboard watch was trooping below at eight bells; "I meant to have him myself, if you hadn't froze to him first; he dug up aloft so nighty lively last night. Raised 'long shore, I suppose."

"No, he's right from the cow and grass deestrick, Mr. Bradmore, but he's got a nat'ral taste for salt water, and is as much to hum on the top-sail-yard already, as he'd be in his father's medder."

"If only that sort of chaps come to sea, it would be a good deal better all round. We've got a lively craft here, but I should say she was better calculated for a privateer han for the mahogany trade, and she's got a thunderin' crew for the business she's in."

"The *Delily* is a good sea boat, and a smart sailer, but not overly lucky. She never went ashore or lost her sticks, but somehow she never made payin' v'yges, and I consate he owners was rather sick of her, and put her into this business to spite her. I don't know much about this trade, or how many men it takes to handle that sort of cargo, but t orter be a good business if it takes so many to run it."

Mr. Cradmore made no reply, and presently disappeared down the companion-way.

The good breeze before which the *Delilah* left port held until she had crossed the Gulf Stream; then it fell calm for four-and-twenty hours, and Captain Romeroz raged like a politician who has done a world of dirty party-work and failed to get the post-office or council appointment on which he had set his noble heart. Romeroz took no rest during the interlude; he spent the greater part of his time on the top-gallant cross-trees, spy-glass in hand, and it was obvious to anyone, not too phlegmatic to notice anything, that he was very uneasy.

Steve, who was on the alert for any indications that the barque was engaged in an illegal enterprise, took mental note of the Captain's evident perturbation, though he did not know but what all commanders were similarly affected under the same circumstances, and in order to satisfy himself on this point he found an opportunity to inquire of Mr. Budlong whether it was imperatively necessary for them to reach the mahogany country at any particular date.

The mate eyed the youngster sharply, and answered evasively. He could understand well enough that the calm was vexatious to any commander, whose professional reputation might be improved by making a quick passage; but he could not understand why Romeroz should feel alarmed, as he undoubtedly did, or what he was looking for so persistently from the cross-trees. The foreign gentlemen, moreover, who lounged upon the quarter-deck in such a free and easy manner, were unable to conceal the fact that they were not altogether comfortable in mind, and Mr. Cradmore damned the quiescence a good deal more energetically than the average second mate would be expected to do.

All these things had a suspicious look to the old sea-dog, but he was not the one to whisper mere suspicions to a green hand, and a boy at that.

Before Romeroz had quite fretted his temper away the wind came back, and the *Delilah* resumed her course. Four days later she was rolling down through the Windward Passage, with all sails set, making eighteen knots an hour and riding the seas as lightly as a Mother Carey's chicken.

In this gallant style she swept out into the Caribbean Sea, and Mr. Budlong, who was in charge of the deck at the time, went below for instructions as to the course he was to steer.

"Hug the Cuban coast, close, as close as you safely can, for the present, Señor Budlong," Captain Romeroz answered, looking up from the chart he was examining, "and if you see a suspicious sail pass down the word."

"I don't know as I rightly understand what you mean by a suspicious sail, sir."

"Oh, these are war times, you know, and we must not fall in with a Mexican cruiser," the Captain said, with a rippling laugh.

"I shouldn't wonder if he's a devilish sight more afraid of one of Uncle Sam's cruisers," Mr. Budlong muttered to himself as he ascended the companion way; "and I begin to have my doubts, so I do, about this mahogany business and them Portuguese cusses in the cabin. There's mischief brewin', or I'm a Chinaman, but what it is, darn if I know."

The barque continued her course, as close in to the coast of Southern Cuba as prudence would permit, the remainder of that day and well into the night. Soon after the last dog-watch Captain Romeroz came on deck with a night-glass slung to his neck, exchanged a word or two in an undertone with Mr. Cradmore, who was on duty, and then ascended the main shrouds. At six bells the order was issued to take in the light canvas; then the courses were clewed up and the barque headed for shore under topsails.

To the inexperienced looker-on it would have seemed that Captain Romeroz was about to beach his vessel; directly

ahead on the course they were sailing a dense, tangled tropical forest, indented by no bay or lagoon, so far as could be seen from the deck, came down to the water's edge. In the distance a tall volcanic peak towered heavenward, and still further inland the serrated outline of a mountain range could be distinguished, but there was no sign of quay or city; it was a trackless wilderness as far as the eye could reach, with nothing to indicate that adventurer had ever visited it before.

When the *Delilah* was almost beneath the shadow of the masses of verdure that lined the shore, a narrow estuary was visible, leading inland. Into this they steered, and, before losing their wind, in consequence of the surrounding forest, they merged upon a broad expanse of water environed by foliage and completely concealed from the contiguous ocean.

A better hiding place could hardly have been desired by any artful dodger of the sea; and it was already appropriated. On the farther side of the lagoon a large vessel, with tall, raking spars, was riding at anchor. The precision with which her sails were furled would have told a professional sailor that she was a cruiser, and her warlike character was farther indicated by a row of open ports, through which the muzzles of a formidable battery protruded, while a couple of heavy guns working on pivots protected her upper deck. A good many men in uniform could be distinguished in the tops and on the fore-castle. A number of gold-banded caps were visible on the quarter-deck, and the Mexican flag drooped over the taffrail.

The *Delilah* approached within a quarter of a mile of the war ship; then she came curtseying round on the port tack, and a moment later she let go her anchor.

Mr. Budlong had been comfortably snoozing in his state-room for two hours or more, and was consequently unaware that the cruise had suddenly terminated. He was a sound

sleeper, as an honest man should be, but the noise incident to anchoring roused him, and he hastened to the deck.

He took in the situation at a glance, and, although up to that moment he had only entertained a dim suspicion that the *Delilah* was upon any other than a legitimate voyage, he instantly comprehended the true state of affairs, and determined upon his line of future conduct.

"A snug berth this for a craft that's so modest she don't want all the world staring at her," Mr. Budlong, nonchalantly, remarked to the second officer; "but I wonder if we came to this 'ere place arter mahogany, and if that Mexican cruiser happened round to take care on us?"

Mr. Cradmore laughed, a little constrainedly. "I shouldn't wonder," he said, "if it turned out that the owners of it have hit on something that will pay better than mahogany, Mr. Budlong. If they have, and are disposed to do the fair thing by us, I, for one, shan't grumble."

"I never object to the fair thing, and can most allus manage to find out whether my interest is to be windward or leeward; but it kind of looks to me as though the owners ought to be middlin' liberal, for some of us may have a chance to dance on nothin' before we're through with this business, if I ain't out of my reckoning."

"You won't have any reason to find fault with the new arrangement, if there is one, on the score of liberality," Cradmore said, dropping his voice to a confidential key; "and that reminds me, Captain Romero wants a word with you in the cabin when you're at leisure."

"I might as well see him now; it's only just gone seven bells, and I always like to have things settled and off my mind."

Then Mr. Budlong went below, and for the next hour was closeted with the commander of the *Delilah* in confidential conversation.

CHAPTER IX.

When Mr. Budlong returned to the deck he found it in charge of the anchor watch. The second mate, however, was loitering in the waist, puffing his pipe and making a praiseworthy but abortive attempt to appear interested in the contemplation of the charming tropical landscape before him, which was revealed in all its splendor by a full moon. His eyes were, nevertheless, turned toward the Mexican cruiser more frequently than toward the beautiful shore, or the sleeping waters of the lagoon, which mirrored a thousand fantastic shapes.

It chanced that Mr. Budlong was the happy possessor of an utterly inexpressive countenance. He had been a good deal exercised in mind by his interview with Captain Romero, and was satisfied that he was in a delicate, not to say dangerous, position, but his honest, weather-beaten face betrayed no mental disturbance, when he joined his subordinate officer.

"I guess you was about right, Mr. Cradmore," he said, "in thinking the owners had found a better use for this 'ere lively craft than carrying mahogany lumber, and I judge from what the skipper says, we can do a pretty thing for ourselves by stickin' by her. The risk of going to the yard-arm in a hurry ain't consolin', but, damme, Uncle Sam's got to catch us afore he can hang us, and 'twill take a smart boat with a stiff breeze to overhaul the *Delily*."

"That's about my notion, Mr. Budlong, although, thank the Lord, I'm a subject of Queen Victoria, and your Uncle Sam won't send me to the yard-arm. There'll be good pay in this business, and a chance for big prize money."

"That's so; and, then, our folks hadn't no business sendin' an invadin' army into Mexico, and, if we had an honest Whig instead of that blasted Democrat in the presidential chair, this 'ere war wouldn't a happened."

I may mention in passing, leaving the reader to draw his own inferences, that the worthy mate had been an ardent partisan of Colonel Polk. He adhered to the Democracy as he did to the close-communion Baptist Church, with which his ancestors for generations had been identified, from family tradition, and voted that ticket and attended that church whenever opportunity offered.

The two officers conversed for half an hour or more, concerning their future career, in apparent amity; then Budlong yawned prodigiously, and rolled off to his state-room, where he was somewhat surprised to find our friend Steve awaiting him, with an enormous bee in his bonnet.

"I wish to speak with you, Mr. Budlong," the boy said, impetuously. "Can you tell me whether the ship has come to this queer place for a proper purpose?"

"Why, there ain't nothin' improper about mahogany, is there?"

"No; but we were going to some place in Central America after that, and here we are on the coast of Cuba. Besides, there's an armed vessel here—a Mexican, some of the men say—and we seem to have come to meet her."

"Well, that's sociable, and I guess the Mexican won't hurt us."

"Don't suppose she will, for I can't help thinking the Captain knows all about her and expected to find her here; but I don't believe an honest American merchant-ship would be on friendly terms with a Mexican armed vessel when the two countries are at war."

"You argy like a lawyer, younker, and I don't mind tellin' ye that the *Delily* is goin' into another kind of trade. If I ain't mistaken, we shall be histin' out them thunderin' great

boxes to-morrow, and if we find 'em full of weepsons of one kind or 'nother, instead of saw-mill truck, I shan't wonder."

"And what then?"

"Why, I consate the barque will run up Mexican colors and start privateerin'."

"To capture and plunder American vessels?"

"That's about the size of it; but we shall make lots of money, and you can be a middy, if you like, and strut round with a gold band on your cap."

"And fight against my own country!" the boy cried, indignantly. "I'll do no such thing, Mr. Budlong. I will leave the ship at once."

"How will you manage that, young bantam, if the skipper says he can't spare you?"

"I'll jump overboard and swim ashore, or drown, if I can do no better."

"Good boy," the mate said, with an approving nod; "I thought as how a chap named Wayne would be true blue."

"Then, what you have been telling me is not so?"

"It's true enough, younker, that the *Delily* is going to be turned into a Mexican pirate; but you and I ain't agoing to stay aboard of her long; we ain't. Howsomever, we must pretend we are, or we'll never get away alive."

Steve looked grave and somewhat anxious, but not in the least frightened; the old sailor bestowed upon him another approving glance, and proceeded to explain that they must make their escape in one of the ship's boats, and endeavor to reach some American port. They could, of course, take refuge on the Cuban coast, after placing a safe distance between themselves and the *Delilah*; but Budlong did not desire to land, if he could help it, in a tropical wilderness, infested with poisonous reptiles and tormenting insects. He was not quite certain, either, in what light the island authorities might regard American citizens in those troub-

lous times; consequently, he deemed it advisable to keep clear of the populous towns.

The voyage, after all, would not be startlingly long or hazardous, but it would require considerable ingenuity to secure, equip, and provision a boat. The mate did not despair, however; he instructed Steve how to coöperate with him to the best advantage, and to be ready for departure at a moment's notice.

"That cook's mate we'll leave where he is," Budlong observed, after concluding his instructions. "He's an ordinary cuss, to make the best of him, and I guess his moral natur won't get damaged on a Mexican pirate."

"We must take Prometheus with us, sir," Steve said, firmly; "he left his home, such as it was, to go with me, because I asked him; he's not a very good boy, I suppose, but I can't leave him behind."

"Well, well, let the lubber go, if you're sot on it—mebby he'll fall overboard afore we start; I hope so."

That night Steve commenced a letter to the *Daily Cormorant*, and wrote until far into the night. He was vastly interested in his work, and his performance, if not brilliant, was creditable. How the letter was to reach its destination he did not know, but he trusted to luck and scribbled on.

CHAPTER X.

Business, and pretty lively business, was the order on board the *Delilah* next morning, as Mr. Budlong had foreboded. At two bells the crew was summoned aft to hear a speech from Captain Romeroz. The purport of the nautical orator's address was that the barque had changed owners, changed occupation, and changed flags. They had left the metropolis of the great North American republic a quiet merchantman, but had become the property of a

smaller republic, also North American, which was then at war with "her big neighbor, because the latter had, without just cause, invaded her territory and butchered her citizens. Thereafter, the craft would sail as a Nemesis, meting out destruction to the commerce of a great power which had seized upon a trivial pretext for assuming a belligerent attitude towards another power, weak in civilization, in national status, in money, and effective fighting force."

The oration was admirably adapted to the audience that listened to it, although it exhibited a painful disregard for facts, but this is a leading characteristic of a vast number of orations by which the popular heart is moved.

The foreign element of the *Delilah's* company was well enough satisfied to embark in the new enterprise, under the new flag, and take their chances for prize money, having no natural or assumed allegiance to deter them from such a course. Some of Uncle Sam's subjects, also, did not decline Romero's invitation, either through indifference to or ignorance of the pains and penalties incident to treason. A very few, perhaps, did not exactly understand the situation, and one or two, for reasons of their own, "played 'possum."

But there was one contumacious individual who would not join the new privateer, and disdained all subterfuges. This was a young New York street arab, known in his native haunts as the "wharf rat." He had a broken nose, carrotty hair, and a pock-marked face, and, in fine, was considerably removed from an interesting-looking specimen of humanity; he declared, however, in the picturesque but profane vernacular of his tribe that he wouldn't turn pirate to please anybody. Mr. Cradmore reasoned the case with him, using a rope's end to emphasize the strong points of his argument, but, failing to convince the erring one, he chucked him down into the run, where his patriotism would have an opportunity of cooling off, darkness and bilge-water aiding.

When all preliminaries had received attention, the serious work began. A tackle was got aloft, the great packing cases hoisted up and opened. They were filled, as every one was by this time prepared to expect, with a variety of warlike material, instead of industrial machinery, and in a short time the deck was covered with a medley of ship's guns, their carriages, muskets, boarding pikes, and sabers.

It required time, patience, and skilled labor to bring order out of this chaos and to transform the merchantman into a cruiser, but all these essentials the new owners of the *Delilah* possessed, and the work progressed rapidly.

For eight-and-forty hours after the transformation business began Captain Romero contrived to maintain a pretty sharp espionage over our friend Budlong, concerning whose strict fealty to the new service he had his doubts, but when two days had passed without bringing anything to excite his suspicions, he came to the conclusion that he had secured a loyal treasure. Budlong was unmistakably competent, and gradually the entire supervision of the important work was left to him, and the commander spent the major part of his time on the Mexican frigate, away from disagreeable turmoil.

At the end of a week, Budlong's task was rapidly approaching completion, and Romero complimented him upon the professional ability he displayed. The Mexican became somewhat effusive in his commendations, and indulged in a good many polite eulogiums, which, a little later, he heartily wished had never been uttered.

At last the metamorphosed barque was pronounced ready for her new career, and all hands were treated to a holiday. They were treated to something else, also, on that festive occasion. In the first place, the purser made them happy by announcing that he had been directed to see a double allowance of grog served out, and before this gentle potation had more than commenced to do its work, Budlong

caused a cask of Jamaica rum to be broached, and invited everyone to help himself. The invitation was promptly accepted. All hands had been hard at work for a considerable time and were more than ordinarily delighted with the opportunity for a gratuitous debauch.

It came to pass, therefore, that about eight o'clock P. M. Mr. Budlong found himself in charge of a crew most of whom were sleeping the profound slumber of intoxication, while the remainder, Steve and Prometheus excepted, were still "passing the can" so persistently that it was safe to predict they would soon be in the same interesting condition. Romeroz and Cradmore were both spending the night on the frigate.

The time had come for the mate to put in operation his plan for escape; but he had a retaliatory duty to perform first—namely, to render the *Delilah* as harmless as possible without actually destroying her. This duty he accomplished quite to his satisfaction by spiking the ship's guns and flooding the magazine.

While Mr. Budlong was thus employed Steve and Prometheus, in accordance with previous instructions, secured the compass from the binnacle, and a good supply of provisions, together with their own personal belongings, and deposited them in the yawl which was hanging at the after-davits. The mate, in due time, added to this cargo his clothes-bag, sextant, navigator, and nautical almanac, a couple of muskets with ammunition, two pairs of boarding pistols, and a large tarpaulin.

By four bells the preparations were complete; the boat was lowered without accident and without awaking any of the slumbering crew.

"We had orter give that chap down in the run a chance to save his bacon," the mate said, remembering at the last moment the "sufferer for conscience' sake." "He don't fly Sunday-school colors any to speak on, but, darn me, he's

plucky, and he wouldn't jine these cut-throats. I'll have a look at him."

When Mr. Budlong disappeared on this mission, Prometheus sauntered away, with a speculation in view. He crept down to the cabin, which he entered by means of a skeleton key he had manufactured at odd moments, and looked about him. Captain Romero's silver-mounted pistols were lying on the locker; these he thrust into his trowsers' pockets, together with a silver powder-flask and an elaborately ornamented bullet pouch; Captain Romero's elegant *poncho* was hanging on a bracket; this he threw over his shoulders, and was about retiring when his glance rested on the chronometer. He did not know the use or value of the instrument, but it was portable property, so he clapped it under his arm and hurried on deck, where he discovered that Steve had already taken his place in the boat, which was towing astern.

At that instant Mr. Budlong reappeared with the patriotic wharf rat in charge, and he stopped short, contemplating with amazement the rural youngster, who had no opportunity to conceal his spoils.

"He's got the skipper's *poncho*," the mate said, "and I'm blessed if he ain't stole the chronometer, into the bargain. Well, for once in a way, it's handy having a nat'ral-born thief around. Give me the instrument, you son of a pick-pocket! And then down, you youngers! Go into the boat; it's time to be off."

The boys slid down the falls; the mate followed; Steve cast off, and then the old sailor, taking an oar, sculled the boat rapidly across the lagoon.

In half an hour the open ocean was before them; then the mast was shipped, the mainsail and jib hoisted, and the yawl glided seaward, making a compass course of south-south-west.

CHAPTER XI.

At daylight the yawl was out of sight of land. Mr. Budlong had not taken his chances of running out into the heart of the Caribbean Sea without substantial reasons for so doing. He could have hugged the Cuban shore while he made his way westward, and that is what a younger or less experienced man, circumstanced as he was, probably would have done; but he was seawise, and took a seaman's precautions.

He knew that only the fragment of a day could elapse before his flight and the mischief he had wrought on board the *Delilah* would be discovered; he knew Romerez's not especially angelic temper would be ruffled, to say the least, when he became aware of the trick that had been played upon him, and that well-appointed boats would be dispatched up and down the coast to pursue and bring him back. It was with a view of baffling such a pursuit that he stood boldly out to sea.

In the morning he was comparatively safe, except from wind and water. There were, however, some sinister warnings written upon the firmament in language which any thoroughbred sailor could translate at sight, hinting that the winds and the waves might have to be contended with, coolly and with skill, before the yawl party could feel sure that, in escaping one peril, it had not run into a graver one.

In fine, the weather looked threatening.

If Mr. Budlong felt any apprehensions, he kept them to himself; he greeted his juvenile crew cheerfully, when the new day had dawned, and ordered Prometheus to serve breakfast.

The youngsters enjoyed the meal, which consisted of pilot bread and cold boiled beef, as most youngsters enjoy any irregular picnic affair of the kind. When it was concluded, Budlong announced that Steve would head the larboard watch, consisting of himself and the wharf rat, while he would take charge of the starboard watch, with our friend Prometheus for a crew.

By noon they had made sufficient southing to be below the Isle of Pines, which, infested as it was at that time with pirates, was a good locality to avoid, and their course was altered to west-by-north. At eight bells, Budlong ordered the starboard watch to turn in; Steve felt that a serious, but by no means disagreeable, responsibility devolved upon him, when he took the helm and saw his superior making a pillow of his monkey jacket, as if with the intention of devoting the next four hours to slumber. He felt every inch an executive officer, and, I am afraid, threw an unnecessary amount of authority into his voice when he ordered the wharf rat to go forward and keep a sharp lookout over the bows. The considerate young Neptune did not wish to run down any thousand-ton ships, through culpable negligence, and, thanks to his wise precautions, no such disaster occurred.

At three bells, however, Steve began to feel somewhat apprehensive; the sky was a good deal overcast, the wind came and went in fitful puffs; the gulls were flying about in a semi-distracted manner, as though not knowing exactly what to do in circumstances so perplexing. Steve was in a somewhat similar state of uncertainty; but he took the only sensible course open to him; he roused Mr. Budlong, and fell back into a subordinate position with infinite satisfaction.

"Black squall comin' up, and by the look of things it's going to be a nasty one," the mate said, after a deliberate survey of the surroundings. "I thought somethin' of the

kind was brewin' when I turned in; I conjectured, though, there'd be time enough for a nap before the fun began. But you didn't call me much too soon, you didn't; the wind's coming down mighty fast, and we must look alive."

Such measures as prudence suggested were quickly taken; sail was reduced to the minimum; the cargo secured as well as circumstances permitted; and the tarpaulin disposed so as to prevent the wetting of such stores as it was essential to keep dry.

Then they watched and waited, but the vigil was not of long duration. Things had scarcely been made snug, when, with a rush and roar, the tornado was upon them. For a moment it seemed as if the yawl would be bodily lifted from the water and hurled away through the air, like a withered autumn leaf, but Budlong put her before the wind, and away she went like a rocket. The hurricane screamed through the meagre rigging, playing a dreadful melody; the ocean's scud swept over them in a continuous torrent, the spar bent like a stalk of grain under the weight of a sparrow, and threatened every instant to go over the side. Budlong was grim, cool, and self-reliant; Steve was rather pale, but kept his wits about him; the wharf rat found refuge in blasphemy, while Prometheus fell upon his sinful knees, and tried to recall some kind of a prayer, but failed signally, as the yawl sped onward.

When the first blast had expended its fury, there was a momentary lull, and the imperiled voyagers could breathe again, then old Boreas settled down to business, and for the next two hours, had everything his own way. At six bells Budlong began to seriously question whether they could ride out the gale. Steve had abandoned all hope, but looked death gravely in the face. The other youngsters were completely cowed and whimpering.

Just as affairs had reached this unpleasant culmination, a new hope was born to the hopeless ones. Gazing off over

the waters, which were seething under the breath of the hurricane, Budlong descried upon their starboard quarter a large ship, staggering along under short canvas. She was going three knots to their two, and, upon the course she was sailing, would pass at least a mile to windward of the tempest-tossed boat. This was a terrible distance, under the circumstances. Budlong instantly determined to signal the stranger; but he entertained only feeble hope that the attempt would be successful. He looked about for something to use as a flag, but nothing that could be substituted for bunting appeared to be ready at hand. He was a man of expedients when upon his natural element, the ocean. He considered briefly and acted promptly. His jacket was first thrown off, his red flannel shirt followed, and an instant later was displayed upon a boat hook, as a piteous appeal to the strong stranger, who could pursue her chosen path despite the tempest, to have compassion upon and to succor the little cockle-shell, then and there at the cruel mercy of the elements.

For a little time it seemed doubtful whether the unique signal of distress had been noticed; but just as hope was dying in the hearts of the yawl party, a significant movement was observed on the ship. Her rigging was suddenly filled with a multitude of men, and her course altered a couple of points. The precision with which the manœuvre was accomplished, the number of people in sight, and her *tout ensemble*, would have told less experienced eyes than Mr. Budlong possessed that it was an armed vessel. He was relieved of a considerable load of anxiety, also, when he discovered, from certain peculiarities of her rig, that she was unmistakably a United States sloop of war. This looked as though their troubles were nearly over. And so, indeed, they were. Just at the proper moment the cruiser went in stays, giving the yawl the weather gauge. The latter crept down under her lee, like a frightened child seeking maternal pro-

tection in the hour of danger. A little later the boat swung in tackles; then the ship filled away, half burying herself in the opposing sea, and resumed her course, nodding defiantly as she rose and fell on the waves of the ill-omened Caribbean.

It was the United States sloop of war *Saratoga*, cruising in search of the merchant barque *Delilah*, supposed to have been unlawfully disposed of to the Mexican Government.

CHAPTER XII.

The reader understands by this time, I trust, that my unpretending and not always exemplary hero was reasonably plucky, notwithstanding his shortcomings. Still, the fact must be admitted that he was very glad to exchange a yawl in a hurricane for a staunch ship, and he was not in the least ambitious again to encounter such perils as he had, once in a way, escaped from unscathed. It is one thing to read of a party adrift in an open boat on a storm-swept, dangerous sea, but something entirely different to take a part in such an adventure and look death in the face, even for a few, seemingly interminable, hours.

Steve thought, with good reason, he had been in luck thus far, all things considered, but he also thought that the lucky sometimes tempt fate once too often. To be plain about it, our young friend was rather disgusted with salt water; it had its attractions, to be sure, but these were counterbalanced by some serious disadvantages—such, for instance, as shipping on a pirate by mistake and being obliged to take to an open boat in order to save one's life and reputation. Upon the whole, he imagined he had had about enough of it.

Such being the case, he naturally recalled that second love of his—journalism—and was inclined to offer that exacting mistress his entire devotion thenceforward. What the chance

would be for procuring a situation that would yield bread and cheese in satisfactory abundance, upon the *Cormorant* or some of its cotemporaries, he did not know; but he determined to make his way back to New York as soon as possible, and entertained an abiding faith that Shannahan would find some loophole for him in the great newspaper world into which he might creep.

Thinking of Shannahan brought to his mind the mysterious letter given him by Mr. Claymore, to be opened in the event of its becoming necessary for him to abandon the *Delilah*.

That necessity had arisen, but his attention had been so fully occupied with absorbing experiences that he had forgotten all about the missive. He at once looked it out from amongst his modest baggage, and broke the seal. To his amazement, it informed him that Mr. Claymore had guessed pretty accurately for what service the *Delilah* was really destined; also that he was commissioned upon leaving her, as it was inferred he would when he learned her true character, to proceed at once to Vera Cruz, where some stirring military scenes were likely soon to be enacted, as a regular correspondent of the *Cormorant*. The letter contained a note of introduction to an officer on General Scott's staff, a cheque for two hundred dollars, and formal authority to draw upon the *Cormorant* office for such funds as he might require in the prosecution of his duties.

"You will perceive that I am reposing great confidence in you," Mr. Claymore wrote, in conclusion, "but I'm sure you'll prove worthy of it. I do not mind saying that I have a strong liking for you, and am anxious to see you succeed in a vocation for which I think you have a decided natural aptitude. Be vigilant, energetic, and faithful, and I am confident you will serve us satisfactorily."

At first Steve was dumbfounded, then elated, then half frightened. He could hardly believe Mr. Claymore actually

meant to send him upon such a mission; yet evidence of the fact was in his hand. He could not but feel pleased at such a mark of confidence; and then the query arose in his mind whether he was competent to perform the duty assigned him. The possibility of failure made him shiver.

He was by no means disposed, however, to let slip this opportunity for trying his hand at a vocation for which he had a strong predilection; so, after a brief skirmish with self-distrust, he determined to accept the situation, and do his best to justify the good opinion Mr. Claymore seemed to have formed of him.

Having arrived at this decision, he went off to find Mr. Budlong and acquaint him with his new prospects. The honest sailor was not in the least surprised to learn that the *Cormorant* people wanted his *protégé*; he considered him a model of learning and genius, quite able to fill, with credit, any position where learning and genius were required; but, nevertheless, he could not help feeling somewhat disappointed. He was very fond of the boy, and had set his heart upon making a thorough sailor of him; still he was one of the most unselfish of mortals, and would not suffer his own preferences to stand in the way of the young fellow's best advancement.

“Mebby that ain't a bad idee,” Budlong said, after a season of deliberation. “Sailin' is a manly sort of business, but it's dangerous, and sailor men is apt to fall into bad ways. What with eatin' salt junk months on a stretch, they are mostly powerful thirsty when they get ashore; and they've got more wives scattered over the face of the 'arth than is good for 'em. Howsomever, you will have time enough to think about it, for we'll have to stay where we are for a spell, anyhow.”

“We're not prisoners, I hope,” Steve said, with the outlines of a newspaper article on personal liberty running in his mind.

"Well, no; not in the way you mean, younker; but, you see, the *Saratoga* has got a little account to settle with the *Delilah*, before she can conveniently land ye at any of Uncle Sam's ports; so it is just as well to take it easy."

Steve blushed—probably for the last time, as he was about embarking in the profession of journalism. He knew well enough he was not a prisoner; he also knew, or at all events fully believed, that he would be landed at the first convenient opportunity; but he was an accredited newspaper correspondent, and had a vague notion that the army and navy of the United States were, or ought to be, subject to the orders of Mr. Claymore, editor-in-chief of the *Daily Cormorant*, or any member of the staff. I have known more mature journalists who were substantially of the same way of thinking.

It was soon noised about that our hero belonged to the press gang, and quarters were assigned to him in the ward room. He found some congenial companions among the incipient admirals, and all seemed good-naturedly disposed to make him at home in their mess.

In the course of the day he made another acquaintance: A young gentleman, rather older than himself and infinitely his superior in experience, evidently, looked him up and presented his card, which read: "Charles Sherwood Dale, Staff Correspondent, *Evening Hyena*." It was another New York reporter, bound for Vera Cruz and glory.

CHAPTER XIII.

The *Saratoga* was commanded by Captain George Delancy, a youngish man, who had obtained his promotion more through family influence than because of superior merit, it was hinted, truthfully or otherwise, in naval circles; consequently a good many jealous eyes watched his movements,

and there were unfriendly tongues ready to comment upon his complete or approximate failure to accomplish any duty assigned to him. One pair of such jealous eyes and one such unfriendly tongue—though naval etiquette kept the latter quiet, as a rule, on ship-board—belonged to his first lieutenant, Mr. Marsden, an older man, and, in his own estimation at least, a better officer than his commander, whom he cordially hated, as was quite natural, all things considered.

Delancy was making his first cruise as commander, but up to date had not seen his way clear to win many laurels. He had been instructed to overhaul and examine the *Delilah*, whose true character was more strongly suspected than anyone connected with her imagined, as soon as she left port. It could then be discovered just what she was, and in all probability papers could be captured establishing the fact that parties in New York, generally unsuspected, had been guilty of unlawful trafficking with a public enemy, and perhaps give information, also, as to the enemy's programme of operations on the high seas.

The *Saratoga* was regarded as a good sailer, and Captain Delancy was not much annoyed when he learned the *Delilah* had sailed at midnight instead of the following morning—as it had been, rather too ostentatiously, announced she intended doing—for he felt confident of his ability to come up with her before she had crossed the Gulf Stream. But in this particular he counted without his host. Had the two vessels sailed together, the barque would have shown the sloop of war a clean pair of heels, and with six or seven hours' start Delancy might as well have undertaken to overhaul a carrier pigeon. It was all in vain that every inch of canvas that the *Saratoga's* yards could spread was set to a good working breeze, or that sharp-eyed lookouts were stationed, glass in hand, on the top-gallant cross-trees; the upper sails of the *Delilah* were never sighted. The cruiser sailed well and

behaved admirably, but it was like a great, deep-chested mastiff following a lithe, trim-built greyhound; in other words, a hopeless chase, unless an accident gave the former some unexpected advantage.

The twenty-four hours' calm that so seriously disturbed Captain Romero's equanimity drove Captain Delancy to the confines of madness. It was bad enough to be thus stopped by the way, but it was exasperating to reflect that the iniquitous barque might, at the same moment, be careening along before a favoring breeze, widening the distance between them, and rendering her ultimate escape certain. There was no use in fuming, however; he was becalmed, and he had only to wait with such patience as he could command for an accommodating breeze to come to the rescue.

It was during this period of inactivity that Mr. Marsden contrived to make himself especially disagreeable to his superior. He expressed a profound regret that a closer watch had not been maintained over the *Delilah*, and that so much childlike faith had been reposed in the announcement that she would sail at a particular time.

"If we could have followed her right down through the Narrows," he said, "we might have brought her to with a shot when she was fairly outside; but, as it is, we shall never set eyes on her again; most likely in a week or two she'll be turned into a privateer and playing the devil with our commerce on the Gulf."

This was hard to bear. In the first place, the language was as nearly disrespectful as even an old and able subordinate could venture to indulge in, and furthermore, Delancy felt that he had been a trifle negligent, and was not quite sure in what light trifling negligence might be regarded by the powers at Washington, in war times.

The wind came back, as the wind will, anywhere outside the doldrums, if you wait long enough, and the sloop of war resumed her interrupted cruise, but saw nothing of the

chase. News of her was obtained from one or two merchantmen; which were spoken before the Windward Passage was made, but it was not encouraging news. The barque was always reported as nearly a day's sail in advance, and going at a rate that defied pursuit, at least by the comparatively slow-sailing armed vessel.

After leaving the Windward Passage, Captain Delancy heard nothing more of the *Delilah* from passing merchantmen. A Cuban fishing craft reported having seen a vessel answering her description hugging the shore early in the evening, but it had mysteriously disappeared, and had not been sighted again. The fishermen were of the opinion that she had gone down through some inexplicable accident, for there was little wind blowing at the time, but this Captain Delancy would not believe, although he would have liked to feel assured she had foundered. He hardly knew what to believe, when, after searching the Caribbean for a week speaking a dozen or more vessels of different nationalities he neither saw nor heard aught of her.

Delancy had about reached the conclusion that farther search was useless, and that he must own up baffled, when humanity sent him to the rescue of a storm-tossed boat. Humanity was well recompensed in this instance, for before the rescued ones had been an hour on board, he learned they belonged to the very craft of which he had been so long in unsuccessful quest; that the elder of them had been her executive officer, and could tell him of her doings and present whereabouts.

Budlong was straightway summoned to the cabin, and the naval commander felt like hugging him, when informed that the barque was not far away, and in a helpless condition, so far as fighting was concerned; also, that there was a fine Mexican war ship in her company, which might be captured if she could be cleverly surprised, as was not improbable, having little reason to apprehend unwelcome

visitors in her secluded retreat. Captain Delancy would gladly have kept this wonderful news to himself until the moment came to swoop down upon his prey, but that was impossible. The boys had disclosed the information, to some of the ward-room gentry, so, before the conference in the cabin closed, everyone, fore and aft, was advised. Only remained, therefore, to get under way for the lag without loss of time.

Mr. Budlong readily undertook to act as pilot. He had a patriotic desire to see the *Delilah* and her consort effectually prevented from entering upon a career that promised to work incalculable mischief to American merchantmen; but, aside from this consideration, he had a personal grudge to pay off for having been entrapped into joining a ship sailing under false colors upon an errand that would render her liable to capture by any United States' cruiser, and place any American citizens who sailed in her under suspicion of being guilty of the formidable crime of treason.

Of course, our young journalist was vastly pleased when advised that there was an excellent prospect of a lively naval battle in the near future—for what amazing material it would afford for a letter to the *Cormorant*! If there was anything of a decent fight, he could certainly fill a couple of columns; then there would be the display headings, with possibly an editorial mention of "the highly entertaining communication from our own correspondent, which will be found on another page of this issue." Of a truth, his luck was turning out somewhat phenomenal, and glory appeared to be coming to meet him more than half way.

Mr. Dale, too, pricked up his ears when he understood that, in all likelihood, he would soon have a chance to describe a real battle, while officers and men, with pleasing visions of prize money before them, were in the best of spirits, and impatient to meet the enemy. Many, alas! were

destined to win the sailor's rude winding-sheet, instead of the substantial spoils of war; but this was a contingency no one thought of; at all events, no one mentioned it.

The sloop of war had laid her course for the lagoon as soon as her commander knew what was likely to be found there; but, as the distance was inconsiderable, and it was manifestly not to his interest to approach it by daylight, sail was reduced, and the cruiser stood on under short canvas.

At the close of the first dog-watch, Mr. Budlong having a very correct notion of their whereabouts, took a night-glass and ascended to the main royal yard to reconnoitre. He soon made out the tall volcanic peak he had observed when putting to sea in the yawl the preceding evening. He hailed the deck to impart this information, and give the necessary course to steer. In a few moments the *Saratoga* was headed for the shore, and before ten o'clock hove to off the mouth of the estuary.

CHAPTER XIV.

Captain Delancy had made up his mind to attempt the capture of the perfidious *Delilah* and her consort by a boat attack under cover of darkness, and, being fully aware that his chances of success would be largely augmented if the enemy could be caught napping, no possible precaution was neglected to insure secrecy. Orders were given in suppressed tones, and executed as silently as practicable, and, as the sky was considerably overcast with clouds, the rear guard of the recent hurricane, there were grounds for hoping that the sloop of war had approached the hiding place of the Mexicans unobserved.

Our young naval commander was disposed to make the most of his opportunity, and either win an elaborate wreath of laurels or a sailor's grave and requiem; so he determined

to take command of the leading boat in the contemplated attack, and prove to the world—which in this instance meant the Secretary of the Navy—that he had good stuff in him, and was not unworthy of the promotion he had lately gained. Budlong promptly volunteered to accompany him and, to the best of his ability, act the part of a pilot, and the proffered service was as promptly accepted. Within what would have appeared to a landsman an incredibly short time after the cruiser hove to, the boats were manned and in the water, waiting the signal to “give way.” As the men were gliding to their places in the Captain’s boat, almost as noiselessly as shadows, our newly-fledged newspaper correspondent put in an appearance on the quarter-deck and preferred the request to be allowed to accompany the expedition.

“Nonsense!” Captain Delancy said, brusquely, “your duty does not call you to risk your life in a skirmish that is likely to be no child’s-play, and we have no room for non-combatants, either, as you may conjecture.”

“But my duty does require me to write an account of this fight, sir. Mr. Claymore would certainly expect me to do so, and I can’t describe the fight if I don’t see it, and I won’t be in the way.”

“Let the youngster go, Captain,” Mr. Budlong said, as though in obedience to a sudden impulse. “He won’t come to harm unless the Skipper aloft wills it, and if he gets back with a whole skin it may help along his promotion on that newspaper craft he’s shipped with.”

“All right, then,” the Captain responded; “in with you, and I like your grit, my lad. But if you lose your head or some of your legs or arms within the next half-hour, don’t blame me.”

“I won’t,” Steve answered, resolutely, and a few moments later he was seated alongside Mr. Budlong in the boat, with this idea uppermost in his mind, that it was a magnificent thing to be a newspaper correspondent and have a chance

to witness a genuine battle, perhaps a desperate one, in order to write about it for the enlightenment of the people of a great city like New York.

The wharf rat, actuated by some misty dreams of glory, or, more probably, from an innate love of fighting, tendered his services for the occasion, and had been gruffly told to go to the devil; but the youthful gamin had no notion of being balked in his purpose. As the last boat pushed off he slid down the fall like a descending meteor, swung himself outward by a vigorous kick, and dropped into the arms of a grim old salt, who greeted him with such an imprecation as only a well-seasoned son of Neptune carries in stock, and who might have unceremoniously pitched him overboard had not the young interloper squirmed out of his grasp, as he had squirmed out of the grasp of many a policeman in his time, and like a flash dived beneath the seat, where he lay secure, for the reason that the signal for departure was just then given, and there was no time to bother about such trumpery.

"If we can only surprise these fellows," Captain Delancy whispered to Mr. Budlong, who was seated near him, "we may count on an easy victory."

"You ain't goin' to surprise nothin' this time," the old merchantman answered, "and there's some pesky rough work ahead on us, or I ain't a judge of Mexican character."

It was even as Mr. Budlong said; for as he spoke, a boat pulling six oars swept from the shadow cast by the overhanging mangrove bushes that lined the shore, and immediately disappeared in the deeper shadows of the estuary. Then a rocket shot into the air and was almost instantly answered by another that rose from the forest, apparently, described the arc of a mighty circle, and fell hissing into the ocean, within a stone's throw of the *Saratoga*.

There was no longer any occasion for silence or secrecy. The man-of-war men, their blood atingle with prospective

carnage, joined in a wild yell that startled the denizens of the tropical jungle, and then, with one accord, bent to their oars with a will, and the little flotilla fairly flew over the dark, still water.

The boats proceeded in Indian file until the lagoon was reached, then they scattered, each making for a position previously determined, and in accordance with minute directions. As the boats swept out into the isolated, forest-hidden harbor, the moon emerged from behind a bank of clouds, and, for the nonce, rendered every feature of the scene distinctly visible. There lay the *Delilah*, trim, elegant, and graceful in her outlines, and not much to be dreaded comparatively, as the attacking party were aware, in consequence of Mr. Budlong's previous attention to her guns and magazine; but beyond was the Mexican cruiser, her decks alive with men, with battle lanterns flashing from her open ports, showing her to be fully prepared to give the nocturnal visitors a warm reception. The *Saratoga's* boats had to pass closely astern of the barque before they could reach the chief object of their solicitude—the Mexican frigate. Three of them passed in safety, but the next, which chanced to be that in which the wharf rat had invited himself to take passage, was greeted by a sharp fire of musketry, and three of the oars dropped into the water, while three stout-hearted sailors fell back upon their fellows, dead or dying. Among these unfortunates was the grim old salt, into whose arms the wharf rat had tumbled when he came aboard in the unique manner before described. He had received a bullet in his forehead, but the New York street arab was in his place before the last breath had left his body, and seized his oar before it drifted beyond reach, doing his best to fill the vacant place.

In the meantime the Captain's boat was heading straight as an arrow for the port bow of the frigate. The distance from the estuary had been half covered, and still the latter

made no sign; then it suddenly awoke to a dreadful activity. The port-holes flamed, then came a reverberating roar that seemed to shake sky, earth, and ocean, and which was repeated in deafening echoes that rolled slowly away into distance, and simultaneously an awful rain of shot and shell fell upon and around the advancing adventurers. A solid shot crashed through one boat and sent it to the bottom, weighted by the mangled remains of most of those who sailed in it. A shell exploded just above that commanded by the Captain, killing the man that sat directly ahead of Steve, and sprinkling the young fellow in a horrible baptism of hot life-blood, while it wounded piteously several others. But the survivors dashed on with undaunted determination. that meant conquest or death to all. At this juncture Steve lost all appreciative consciousness of surrounding circumstances, and remembered nothing more until he found himself scrambling over the bulwark of the Mexican just behind Mr. Budlong, with a cutlass in his hand, obtained he knew not how or where. Then he had an indistinct impression of a ship's deck crowded with men maddened by the excitement of war, and intent only on slaughter; then of a savage thirst for blood arising in his own bosom; then of laying about him right and left with the cutlass, but with what effect he knew no more than he did of what was then transpiring at the Court of Timbuctoo. Then he fancied he heard a tremendous cheer, and somehow became slowly aware of the fact that a victory had been gained, in which he was in some inexplicable way interested. When he finally regained his scattered senses, he was contemplating a ghastly spectacle. The deck of the Mexican cruiser was strewn with the wounded, the mangled, and the dead. Dark red streams trickled from the scuppers, great pools of rapidly coagulating blood defiled the white planks, while groans of human anguish were mingled in a kind of hideous cadence with the huzzas of human triumph. But this

cardinal fact was apparent: The Mexican flag was trailing along the blood-stained deck, while the stars and stripes were floating overhead to the fresh breeze that had just sprung up, as if on purpose to rustle its folds.

A victory had been gained, but to obtain it the usual sacrifice had been made to that sanguinary deity, Mars.

At last, when our young friend had quite pulled himself together, and was satisfied that he was still possessed of his complement of limbs, he discovered Mr. Budlong near him, with an ugly saber slash across his face, but looking happy, not to say hilarious, nevertheless.

"We've paid off that 'ar score of the *Delily*, younker, and owe 'em one on the next deal," he said, "and I want to remark now, while it's fresh in my mind, that I am proud of the way you conducted yourself. I allus knowed you was a bud of promise, so to speak, but you just blowed into a full flower the first skirmidge you got into. Younker, splice hands."

CHAPTER XV.

Among the lesser lions who were born of the boat fight, "Mr. Wayne," as he was politely addressed by the ward-room gentry, after they discovered that he belonged to a metropolitan newspaper, took the lead, and did not find his suddenly acquired popularity in the least unpleasant. His vanity, however, was not dangerously inflated, and the fact that it was not, indicated that there was a fairly solid substratum of common sense underlying his by no means faultless character. Officers and crew complimented him prodigiously upon the daring he had displayed, but he kept his head very well, possibly because he had a strong suspicion that the courage his friends extolled was not quite the genuine thing, but the result of excitement, and that one *should be equipped* with a different kind of pluck to lead a

forlorn hope in cool blood, or to march upon a masked battery without blanching.

Still, it was gratifying to know that his associates thought he had behaved well in the hour of peril, and, upon the whole, he was disposed to honor their judgment.

Our friend, the wharf rat, also contrived to twine something of a laurel wreath around his unesthetic appellation. He had done stout, if not very telling, service at the oar of which he had taken possession when the man assigned to it was killed, and, when he reached the deck of the Mexican, had fought like a devil incarnate, as it chanced, under the eye of the commander, who was generous enough to make a mental note of it, while his mind was engrossed with the all-important fact that he himself was setting an example of heroism that naval officers in all time to come would do well to emulate.

So it came to pass that Captain Delancy took an early opportunity of informing the wharf rat, with a good deal of condescension, that he would be allowed to serve his country by enlisting on the *Saratoga*; and the young vagabond replied, with inimitable *sang-froid*, that he would think the matter over.

Of course, there was great rejoicing on board the *Saratoga* over the victory, although it had been purchased by the life of many a brave fellow and the cruel maiming of many another; but such prices are paid for all victories gained through wager of battle; so the dead were buried, and the wounded cared for, after which the survivors made merry.

Rejoicing on board the United States cruiser meant mortification and the blues on the Mexican frigate and her consort. The majority of the conquered yielded, with comparative good grace, to the inevitable; but Captain Romero raged like a trapped jaguar.

"It is not that I shame my sword to surrender to a brave

gentleman like yourself," he said to Delancy, with a ceremonious bow; "but it is the what you call the bamboozle that my soul maddens."

"It was the fortune of war, Captain," Delancy answered, good naturedly; "next time it may be your turn to ask me to accept your hospitality for a short time, as I now invite you to accept mine."

"Ah, Santa Maria! it was not the fortune of war, but, as I just remarked, the bamboozle, the treachery, that was upon me practiced by that Señor Budlong infamous."

"Budlong played a pretty sharp trick; but, my dear Captain, you need not be reminded that all is fair in love and war."

"In the love, yes, I play as you say, the tricks myself; but in the war all should on the honor be; and this miscreant, this Budlong infernal, he my confidence fully gains; I in charge of my ship leave him; my crew he makes drunk; my boat he steals; my guns he spike so that fight I can not, and am captured like some d—d lubber of the land. Santa Maria! may I live to see him by the neck hanged."

"All right, Captain, catch Budlong and hang him, if nothing less will pay off the score," Delancy said; "but now join me in a bottle, which we will empty to your future success."

Steve set himself about the preparation of a supplemental letter to the *Cormorant* without delay, and in due time produced an account of the engagement, told in direct, vigorous language, and which possessed, moreover, the vividness which only an eye-witness of what was described could have imparted to it. He modestly refrained from any mention of the part he had borne in it, and he did not attempt to go into details he but partially understood. He had before his mental vision a grand picture, with a few general features that stood out in startling colors; these he strove truthfully to reproduce by word-painting, and suc-

ceeded admirably, all things considered, although a little juvenile gush crept in here and there, upon which, I presume, Mr. Claymore exercised his blue pencil with a benevolent smile, and the great American eagle was made to scream rather more defiantly than the necessities of the case demanded. But as a whole, the work was well done, and so thought the writer's chief when it ultimately came under his critical eye.

Mr. Dale, of the *Evening Hyena*, also employed the best part of the day succeeding the battle in a description of it, which, if more faultless in style than that over which our young rural adventurer had expended his time, lacked its nervous energy. But Mr. Dale did a very magnanimous thing in that communication of his, which he would hardly have repeated ten years later, when professional jealousy began to rankle in the heart and curdle the sweet milk of human kindness; he told in glowing terms of the gallant conduct of the young correspondent of the *Cormorant* under fire, and generously mentioned some of the complimentary things that were said of him. Such an act of good nature ought to have secured to the young fellow an advance of salary, but I question if it did; this is a sinful and unappreciative world.

Twenty-four hours after the battle of the lagoon the *Deli-lah*, and the Mexican frigate, in the charge of prize crews, sailed for New York, and one of them carried, among other treasures, the contributions of our correspondents to the literature of the age.

The following day the *Saratoga* squared away for Vera Cruz, in search of new adventures and additional prize money.

CHAPTER XVI.

In the course of events, the good people of Tadmore learned of the stirring incidents that had transpired on the

southern shore of Cuba, and a *furor* was inaugurated in the quiet rural community that convulsed it for a season.

It chanced that the *Cormorant* and the *Evening Hyena* had each a subscriber in the village. The former was taken by Deacon Calfree, a rich farmer, who liked to doze over a daily paper in the evening as he enjoyed going to sleep under Doctor Adamant's discourses on the Sabbath; while the latter came to the address of Deacon Foss, the well-to-do proprietor of a flouring-mill, who found it for his interest to keep track of the New York grain market.

I hope my readers can imagine, for I certainly can not describe, the amazement with which Deacon Foss read Mr. Dale's correspondence one memorable afternoon, from which he learned that Elder Wayne's Steve, supposed to have gone to perdition long before, had not only managed to secure a position on a journal published in the chief city of the United States, but was cutting such a figure in his new calling that another city journal actually devoted considerable space to lauding him skyward.

The excellent man—who never took too much toll at his mill unless the water was so low that he could grind only a part of the day—read the incredible intelligence to the wife of his bosom, after re-reading it to himself to be sure that his eyes were not deceiving him, and then Mrs. Foss whipped on her sun-bonnet, recalling that she had an imperative errand to the house of the nearest neighbor.

I may mention, in passing, that various other ladies had imperative errands to the nearest neighbors' that afternoon, and before dark every woman in town knew everything the *Evening Hyena* had to tell about Steve, and several of them a good deal more, apparently.

The Deacon, meanwhile, after wondering vaguely for a space what was to become of the Christian religion if prodigal sons were to stumble upon eminently respectable employment and win the commendatory notice of the people whose

commendation was worth having, instead of being driven to feeding swine for a living and to longing for a share of the swine's dinner, pulled himself together and hurried away to startle the Elder with his newly-obtained information. He found that gentleman poring over a copy of the *Daily Cormorant*, which had been handed him about five minutes before by Deacon Calftree, who was still endeavoring to wipe the perspiration due to excitement from his visage with a bandana.

The *Cormorant*, among other things of interest, had the following double-leaded editorial item:

"We call the attention of our readers to the thrilling description of a recent engagement between the forces of the United States sloop *Saratoga* and the Mexican frigate *La Senorita Hermosa*, on the southern coast of Cuba, which will be found in another column. Our special correspondent, Mr. Stephen Wayne, participated as a volunteer in this brilliant engagement, and bore himself most gallantly, as we learn from the correspondent of a cotemporary, who was also on the spot. Mr. Wayne has proceeded to Vera Cruz, for the purpose of accompanying General Scott's army on its march to the Mexican capital and keeping us advised of its doings."

The father had just succeeded in comprehending the import of the foregoing, when Deacon Foss, puffing like a porpoise, came in upon him with his news.

"I have just learned from my New York paper something that will greatly surprise you, Brother Wayne," he said; "it would seem at first view that——"

"That my son, instead of going to ruin, as so many of my friends were kind enough to predict he would, has been conducting himself in a very creditable manner," the father said, interrupting the new-comer, rather unceremoniously.

"Just so," the Deacon continued; "I was about to remark as much, though one can't believe all the papers say, and

it's against the Scripture for the undutiful child to prosper, save for a brief season."

"For that brief season I'll be thankful, and will hope a kind Providence has led my boy to see the error of his way, as it has led me to see mine, Deacon, in more than one particular."

"We're all sinful critters," Deacon Calfree observed, sentimentously, "specially the rising generation."

"You're quite right, Deacon Calfree," acquiesced Deacon Foss, "and the young of the present day do seem to be intent only upon treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. But let us hope that the youth who has cost Brother Wayne so much anguish is inclined to return to the fold from which he has so widely strayed, and is, in some measure, entitled to the praise which I find bestowed upon him in the paper I have brought for his father's perusal."

"Amen!" Mr. Wayne said, earnestly, as he took the paper and glanced hurriedly at the generous reference it contained to his wanderer. "I thank you, gentlemen, for hastening to me with these tidings, and now will you pardon the seeming discourtesy if I ask you to leave me, so that I may impart them to my family?"

The Deacons withdrew, upon this pointed suggestion, leaving the precious newspapers with the Elder, who straightway carried them to his wife.

"Here is good news from the boy, at last, Eunice," he said, and then turned away to hide the tears of which, man-like, he was half-ashamed.

How many times that night Mrs. Wayne read what her absent darling had written, and what others had written concerning him mothers will know intuitively, and others need not be informed; but I believe both letters were committed to memory before she slept; and Grandma Wayne was awakened from her afternoon nap to hear the great news. The letters had to be read again for the old lady's

benefit; then she shined her gold-bowed spectacles, only used on special society occasions, and read them herself, and then both women knelt down to thank God, from full hearts, for guiding and guarding the absent loved one.

The Elder, meanwhile, slipped into his shabby study, where he wrote a brief letter, in which was enclosed a well-worn bank-note. It was directed to the *Daily Cormorant*, and contained a six months' subscription to that enterprising journal.

About 98 per cent. of the ladies of Dr. Adamant's church called upon Mrs. Wayne in the course of the following day, and each feminine soul was laden with the same kind of congratulations, which sounded alarmingly like the guardedly-worded condolences one would expect to hear offered to the surviving relatives of an individual who had been hanged. Nearly all the mothers and sisters in Israel expressed themselves as delighted to learn that it was not quite a pirate upon which Steve went to sea; that it was possible, if not probable, he did not know her true character when he shipped on her; and that it was a matter for thankfulness he had found an honest way of earning his bread instead of being sent to prison.

Of course, it was a dreadful thing for a young man not a professor of religion to be following around an army, for most likely he would learn to smoke, drink, and play cards, and gain a knowledge of goodness only knows what other iniquity.

The mother found it a little difficult to listen with equanimity to this sort of discourse, and at times her face flushed as some one of the gossips shot an arrow of insinuation, whose tip was bathed in especially virulent poison, while grandma's eyes often flashed dangerously over the rims of her society spectacles.

It was very plain to these ladies that their visitors, with hardly an exception, were decidedly disappointed to dis-

cover that the evil they had prophesied would surely overtake the son of the house had, through some inexcusable oversight on the part of Providence, failed to run him down, and that the road he had taken appeared to be leading to prosperity and honor instead of the contrary direction.

Let it not be supposed that Mrs. Wayne's visitors were monsters of inhumanity. They were simply Christian pagans, women of narrow minds and narrow culture, educated in the narrowest of creeds, for which there is scarcely a shadow of scriptural authority, and quite destitute of that chiefest of Christian virtues, *charity*, that enables those who possess it to see humanity at its best, not at its worst; to believe that God, not the devil, has supreme control of human affairs; that there is in truth more rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner saved through atoning love, than over one consigned to eternal death, to satisfy Divine vengeance.

On the next Sunday morning, Dr. Adamant preached from these words: "And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat," and gave all prodigal sons a tremendous going over. Mamma and Grandma Wayne, however, were not there to hear it, and the Elder went comfortably to sleep, as good men are excusable for doing in warm weather, as soon as the text was announced.

CHAPTER XVII.

A few months after the battle of the lagoon, a number of our friends were enjoying tent life, in a suburb of Vera Cruz, over which the stars and stripes were now floating, and disposed to think, notwithstanding some drawbacks—fleas, heat, and the prevalence of *vomito negro*, for example—that their lines had fallen in rather pleasant places.

Upon reaching port, Steve had lost no time in presenting his letter of introduction, which was addressed to Colonel Tangent, of the Engineer Corps. The military gentleman looked somewhat surprised when he saw what a youthful newspaper fledgeling was commended to his good offices, but he presumed Mr. Claymore knew what he was about, and, as he was especially desirous of standing well upon the books of the famous New York editor, who was believed to have it in his power to assist materially, through his influence with the Administration, in the making or marring of men's fortunes, he received Mr. Claymore's *protégé* graciously, and gave him some pointers worth making a note of.

Just when the main body of the army would move for the interior Colonel Tangent did not know—or, what is more likely, was not inclined to tell—but he recommended Steve to provide himself at once with a tent, camp equipage, mules, and servant.

"You can then live comfortably enough while we remain here," the Colonel said; "more comfortably, in fact, than you could at one of those infernal Mexican hotels, and be ready to march on short notice when there is a forward movement. Call on me without hesitation for any temporary supply of funds you may require."

"Thanks; I will call upon you if necessary," Steve answered; and then he went away, thinking what an amazing thing it was to be a hail-fellow-well-met, as it were, with one of the chieftains upon whom the country depended, when the clouds of war for the moment, obscured the sun of its prosperity.

Mr. Budlong highly approved of Colonel Tangent's suggestions when they were explained to him, and promptly offered some additional ones.

"I'm minded to go along with you, younker, see'in as how you can't stay with me," the mate said. "The fact is,

I've no younker of my own, and I don't feel like losin' sight o' ye."

"That's just splendid, Mr. Budlong!" Steve cried, enthusiastically. "The only disagreeable thing I could see about this new work of mine was the parting from you, which I supposed was inevitable."

"Well, we won't part yet awhile. I haven't taken but one land cruise in twenty years; that was to Cooksaukie, on the Hudson, in '32, and I went there on Captain Splay-foot's 'tater sloop, come to think on it, and I consate it will do me good to see a little terry firmy, as the edicated folks call dry land, of which there is a deal too much, to my thinking."

"Of course, it will do you good, sir, and it will be such an interesting journey. We shall go to the City of Mexico, and visit the halls of the Montezumas, see the Mexicans thrashed, as they ought to be, and have a high old time generally."

"I don't seem to care a cuss about them halls you mention, and there's goin' to be pretty sharp fightin', I take it, afore they loom up, with a good bit of mighty unpleasant travelin' through a beastly mean country, judgin' from the lookout hereabouts; but, nevertheless, we'll stick together, and that cook's mate you're bent on keeping in tow will come handy on the v'yge; he can manage the galley, and, if wust comes to wust, steal enough to keep the copper supplied."

It had occurred to Steve that Prometheus would be available in the camp life he saw in perspective. He was a tolerable cook, and would satisfy the requirements of people with good appetites, whose tastes were not unduly fastidious, while his innate propensity for larceny would be exercised in an enemy's country, where, according to the ethics of war, it would be excusable, not to say praiseworthy.

So the preparations for going into camp were made with all possible expedition. A commodious tent was purchased, together with blankets for sleeping, and pots, pans, and supplies for the culinary department. The tent was pitched where a breath of sea-breeze could occasionally reach it, and a support arranged for the camp kettles, near at hand. Then Mr. Budlong took formal possession, assumed command, and ordered Prometheus to serve plum duff for dinner. Our friend Prometheus was considerably more than satisfied with his dawning future. To be in charge of a kitchen, where such viands as would tickle his palate could be surreptitiously prepared, was the acme of his ambition, and when he learned that he could probably pilfer from the Mexicans, while following an army on a hostile march through their country, without serious danger of being called to account for it, the goblet of his happiness fairly overflowed. The scion of the house of Stebbins determined to make the most of his opportunities, and to bid adieu to Mexico by and by laden with as much property of value as could be conveniently carried.

A considerable number of high-born knights and gentlemen, under the command of one Hernando Cortez, started on a pilgrimage through that same country a good many years before Prometheus' time, with a similar end in view. But these were conquerors—or they intended to be—and were accustomed to ask the blessing of the Mother Church upon their contemplated exploits. They counted, moreover, upon the plaudits of their sovereign and some high civic honours, if they proved to be successful plunderers; while young Mr. Stebbins, in the estimation of the world—and in his own, for that matter—was a mere commonplace thief, who would, sooner or later, land in the penitentiary, where he belonged.

This simply serves to prove the truth of the proverb that "circumstances alter cases."

The wharf rat, whom I was near forgetting while relating the doings of more important personages, determined to follow the fortunes of our hero, when he ascertained that what he regarded as a grand picnic was in contemplation, in preference to striving after more laurels in the naval service, and no one interested made any objection. Budlong rather liked the young vagabond for his fighting qualities; Steve was not averse to having his retinue swelled by another follower, if rather a queer one; while Prometheus was delighted at the prospect of having a chum with whom he could hope to consort on terms approximating equality.

Most of the expense of the outfitting Mr. Budlong insisted upon defraying from a well-filled canvas sack of gold coin, which he produced from his clothes bag.

"I've been savin' of it these many years agin the time I had to go into dry-dock," he remarked, when Steve attempted to expostulate; "but most likely I'll go down with everything standin' some of these times, like enough while I'm on this 'ere land cruise; then I shouldn't want it, and there's nobody but you for me to leave it to, so we'll have the good on it now."

The old sailor was determined, however, that the youngsters, whom he considered under his charge, should be subject to a wholesome degree of nautical discipline. The little company was divided into watches as it had been on the brief yawl voyage, and these, he announced, would relieve each other every four hours when they were under way, and that, while they remained in port, Prometheus and the wharf rat could take turns standing anchor-watch, and be served with an extra glass of grog by way of compensation.

In four-and-twenty hours Mr. Budlong had matters in ship-shape order, and was prepared to get such comfort as was attainable out of life on shore. During the day he got *out his sextant* and took observations, using an artificial

horizon, to determine his latitude and longitude, which he entered in a new log-book, together with the remarks that there was a good working breeze from south-southwest in the morning, which died away toward meridian, leaving them becalmed with a school of mules on the port bow, and a shoal of sore-eyed beggars on the starboard quarter. Neither was nautical etiquette forgotten. He caused it to be known that, as commander, he was entitled to the appellation of "Captain," while Steve, as executive officer, must be addressed by every member of the party as "Mr. Wayne." He tried to set a good example, so far as giving Steve the honors officially due to him was concerned, but failed signally, for a dozen times a day he lapsed into the old semi-affectionate "yunker."

Neither Prometheus nor his colleague, however, were permitted to indulge in a like forgetfulness.

Steve managed to while away the time quite agreeably for the next few weeks, for camp life had not begun to lose the charm it has for almost everyone while the novelty lasts; and, besides, he saw considerable society. Many of the young captains and lieutenants of volunteers were at some pains to cultivate his acquaintance, and frequently asked him to dinner, where he usually met his friend, Mr. Charles Sherwood Dale, of the *Evening Hyena*, who treated him with something more than polite affability.

Our young friend was gaining a good deal of insight into the world of active life through these and kindred experiences, and maturing mentally more rapidly than he was aware of. His vanity was kept in healthful check by an abiding conviction that he owed his success more to good luck than to any particular merit; and, furthermore, he was thoroughly in love with his new calling. It was the most honorable one on earth, he honestly believed, and he determined to do his best to excel in it, so he kept his eyes agaze for whatever was going on worth reporting, and spent

a good many hours in re-writing his *Cormorant* letters, to the decided improvement of his composition.

Night invariably found him at his tent in the safe company of Mr. Budlong and out of harm's way. He was actuated to this course partly because he knew that by so doing he could best show his gratitude to the honest sailor, who was so disinterestedly attached to him, and partly because he fancied his mother would be best pleased to have him so dispose of his leisure hours. The logical consequence was that he was presently spoken of in the garrison as a young fellow, with uncommonly sound moral principles, who could be safely trusted out of sight, and he was respected accordingly.

But in good time this holiday season came to an end, for the order was issued to the army to take up its line of march for the enemy's capital. By far the greater part of the martial band were glad enough to go, for they were tired of Vera Cruz, and had more or less dazzling visions of the semi-barbaric splendor of the city toward which they were to journey; so the columns moved gaily away, and among them our friends, who had also caught something of the spirit of the occasion.

CHAPTER XVIII.

When Mr. Budlong suddenly determined to set off upon a somewhat long and perilous journey, because there was no other way of keeping sight of his favorite, he had not considered how he was to travel, and for several days after most other details had been satisfactorily arranged this matter gave him serious disquiet.

Those who follow an enemy in Mexico, or elsewhere, *usually have to do so on foot or horseback*, but neither of

these methods suited the taste of the old merchantman. For thirty years his pedestrian exploits had been exhibited on a vessel's deck, and never once during that period had he been in a saddle, of which he had the thorough abhorrence common to most old seafaring men.

When finally at his wits' end to discover a way out of the difficulty, a young sergeant, to whom he mentioned his trouble, suggested the purchase of a Mexican cart. The suggestion was made more in jest than in earnest, but it struck Mr. Budlong favorably, and he at once started on a tour of the city to investigate the cart market. Luck favored him—on the *plazza* he found, in charge of its owner, one of the outlandish vehicles which he thought would answer his purpose.

The majority of my readers, in all probability, never saw a Mexican cart, and consequently have no idea what that most absurd of wheeled carriages in the civilized or uncivilized world looks like. *Imprimis*, there are two wheels composed of plank about a foot in thickness, roughly hewn from the trunks of trees, and fastened together with wooden pegs. The wheels may be approximately round when they come from the hands of the artist, but any chance resemblance they may originally have to a circle disappears with use, and after a year or two of service their shape can be described by no figure of speech or geometry. The body is a sort of woven work of cane or small poles and rests upon a ponderous wooden axle; it is never lubricated, and furnishes when the preposterous contrivance is in motion, some of the most diabolical music that ever horrified the sense of hearing. No metal is used in the construction of the vehicle, but it will carry a considerable load and stand a vast amount of rough usage.

The cart that attracted Mr. Budlong's covetous gaze that day was comparatively new and rather a masterpiece of its kind. The wheels were within a few inches of the same

height and thickness; the body was quite artistic in shape, and provided with a canopy of matting, while two yoke of stout, active-looking oxen, were attached to it. The mate had a speaking knowledge of Spanish, as of several other modern languages, and at once opened negotiations, which were soon brought to a successful termination, the buyer being anxious and not inclined to haggle about terms. The cart and oxen were purchased as they stood, and, chancing to remember that he would not probably acquit himself with credit as a charioteer, he secured the services of the late owner, also, for as long or short a period as he might require them.

This stroke of business accomplished, the mate drove triumphantly back to his quarters, where he encountered Mr. Dale, who stared in open-eyed amazement at the extraordinary equipage.

"It is a queer-lookin' craft, take it by and large," Mr. Budlong said, translating aright the young journalist's look, "but it's got a good breadth of beam, and won't capsize easy; then, you see, there's storage room in the hold for the tent and galley fixin's, and I've shipped this 'ere Injun as quartermaster, by the run, because I don't rightly know as I'm up to steerin', myself."

"Your turnout would not cut much of a figure on the Bloomingdale road, certainly," Dale said, laughing, "but it will do as well as anything obtainable hereabouts for the journey ahead of us, I expect."

"Well, it looks seaworthy, and I should say it would heave to handy in heavy weather, but when it comes to makin' a quick passage you can't count on't; still I guess we can keep the convoy in sight."

"There won't be much difficulty in keeping up with the procession, Mr. Budlong; an army can not move very fast at the best."

"There can't nothing move fast through such a country

as this unless its the cholera or yellow fever; and why Uncle Sam didn't fight it out with these Mexican blackguards on the ocean in a Christian way, instead of sending an army trampoosin' 'round through such a God-forsaken region, is more than I know. But mebby it's all for the best; my younker has a notion for writin' army letters, instead of furlin' topsails, and this 'ere tom-fool business gives him the chance he seems to hanker arter."

"Wayne certainly has an excellent opportunity for making his mark, sir; and I don't doubt for a moment but that he'll improve it."

"Right ye are, my lad; that youngster sticks to a main chance like a barnacle to the transom of a sailor man's go-ashore trousers, and he's bound to rate A. B. in whatever he turns his head to."

"He's a promising young fellow, so every body says, Mr. Budlong, and has a most faithful friend in you. I wish I had as disinterested and reliable a one."

Then Mr. Dale strolled away, thinking that Wayne was indeed in luck to have secured the staunch regard of that sturdy old mariner.

Through Colonel Tangent, who kept an eye upon our young correspondent, he secured a fine riding horse at a fair price, and from Mr. Zebulon Shadrach, the sutler of Colonel Tangent's regiment, he obtained an elaborately ornamented Mexican saddle and holsters, at a very considerable advance over their original cost; but they were nobby, and as he was a fair equestrian, owing to his early country experiences, he made rather a dashing appearance, in the estimation of his friends, and, very likely, in his own also. Quite the genuine adventurer, not to say the desperado, he certainly felt, and equal to any number of deeds of daring, when he whirled away at a swinging gallop, occasionally laying his unemployed hand upon the butt of one of the cavalry pistols with which his holsters were furnished.

Charlie Dale often rode in his company, and sometimes a young cavalryman slipped out of the ranks for an interchange of gossip; so, upon the whole, the youngster found this new life quite the reverse of disagreeable.

The Mexican cart did not prove the most comfortable traveling coach that can be imagined, but it suited its new owner passably well, nevertheless, after his ears had grown accustomed to its unearthly creaking. For its rude jolting he had found a remedy in a hammock which he swung under the roof, wherein he reclined luxuriously, puffing his short, black pipe, and watching the telltale suspended above his head, and at times indulging in a comfortable *siesta*. At the proper hours he took observations for latitude and longitude, and worked out his position with the assistance of the chronometer opportunely stolen by Prometheus from the cabin of the *Delilah*, and each night he noted in his log-book the particulars of "the day's run."

Evening was the gala time; then, when supper had been disposed of, he paced up and down before the camp-fire entertaining Steve, and any visitors who chanced to be present, with stirring tales of adventures in former times, on the torrid shores of Africa, when he had been in the "ebony trade," to use his own descriptive phrase; among the Pacific Islands, which he had visited in a sperm whaler; or amid the icebergs of the Antarctic Ocean, whither he had once sailed on a South Shetland sealer.

Very popular these nautical reminiscences became with those who listened to them, and Mr. Budlong was seldom without an appreciative audience when he rested at the end of the day's journey.

For a day or two our friends Prometheus and the wharf rat trudged behind Mr. Budlong's state chariot, or made such *detours* from the line of march as they considered safe. From the latter young Mr. Stebbins seldom returned empty-handed. Sometimes it was a chicken that bulged

beneath his conveniently loose jacket, and again a dozen of eggs reposed safely in the crown of his dilapidated hat. These small fruits of larceny found their way into the camp-kettle in due time, and served to confirm Mr. Budlong in the opinion that one of the light-fingered fraternity was a decided acquisition under certain circumstances.

One night, not so very long after leaving Vera Cruz, Prometheus slipped by the guards, like a weasel, and returned in the early gray of morning, accompanied by a couple of mules bearing Mexican saddles and brands. No questions were asked and no explanations were given, but thereafter this enterprising young gentleman and his chum pursued their journey more comfortably.

CHAPTER XIX.

It is no part of my intention to introduce a history of the Mexican War, or of that part of it in which General Scott's army played the conspicuous part into this unpretending narrative; so I shall not attempt to describe the march of the troops under that really able, though fussy, commander from the seaboard to the capital, the battles he fought, or the victories he gained. All this has been told by far abler pens than mine.

Steve stuck to the army through the whole of its memorable campaign, seeing a good deal of rough life, and enduring no little downright hardship, for which he was none the worse, however. Personally, he witnessed all of that army's famous achievements and described them through the columns of the journal he represented with strict conscientiousness and more than average ability. The work suited him to a nicety; he had the eye and the nose of a born reporter, the facility of expression that those novelists possess who

secure and maintain recognition in *l'empire des lettres*; and his style, after experience had rubbed off the corners of its crudeness, not only passed muster with Mr. Claymore of the *Cormorant*, but found favor with that part of the reading public for which he catered.

In fine, our prodigal son panned out a success as a newspaper correspondent; his letters were frequently copied, with due credit, into several metropolitan journals, and stolen right and left by the country weeklies, which in that way paid him the best compliment in their power, probably without meaning to do anything in the least amiable.

Among other staunch friends that he made during this stirring episode in his career was Colonel Tangent, of the Engineer Corps. That officer, who had not been very profoundly impressed with the completeness of his mental equipment at their first meeting, thought better of him on further acquaintance, and, before the lapse of many weeks, came to the conclusion, from all he saw and heard, that he was a young fellow with enough in him to be worth taking some trouble about on his own account. So Tangent contrived to keep him in sight, and found opportunities for him to see to advantage whatever was worth describing while on the march or during battle. From first to last of more than one engagement he rode at the *aid-de-camp's* side, and I am glad to be able to record that he never once exhibited the white feather while under fire, though how much of his seeming coolness was due to the journalistic instinct to secure accurate information regardless of cost, or how much to inborn courageousness, I can not say. Anyhow, he gained the reputation for pluck the first time shot was flying and blood flowing in his immediate vicinity, and never lost it, subsequently. Therefore, if a fraud in this respect, he was a successful one, which was equivalent to being a genuine hero, in the estimation of a very large percentage of the observing world.

There was another member of Steve's party who appeared to be in a fair way of gaining a character for bravery, and that was our acquaintance, the wharf-rat. This interesting social outcast seemed to revel in a skirmish, and when a battle was imminent he became hilarious. In spite of kicks, cuffs, and curses, he was always somewhere in the advance regiment, when there was hot work going on, fighting like an enraged animal, with any weapon that came first to hand, utterly devoid of fear, and of anything approaching discretion also. The old regulars grinned sardonically when they saw the young scapegallows foremost in a charge upon a Mexican battery; sometimes armed with a musket snatched from a dying soldier, sometimes with a dress sword of an officer who had no longer any use for it; and not infrequently with a club or a fragment of rock, but invariably the very incarnation of blind, unreasoning ferocity, intent upon slaughter for its own sake. But with the cessation of hostilities the impetuous youth toned down and went nonchalantly back to his normal duties as *valet* extraordinary to Mr. Budlong, who liked to have a fellow of mettle about him, and encouraged him to speak of his martial exploits.

Our friend Prometheus, however, never thrust his essentially civic person into the turmoil of war, but he sometimes, indeed often, when the night was conveniently dark, traversed the battle-field, after the conflict was over, while the weary slept and the wounded died under the soft canopy of the southern sky. From these nocturnal rambles Mr. Stebbins usually returned the richer by a few coins, a watch, or a silver-mounted pistol, which he deposited in the capacious saddlebags (of his own manufacture) which adorned the back of the mule he had appropriated shortly after leaving Vera Cruz, when on the march. Steve strove to correct these idiosyncrasies, by an occasional thrashing, which Prometheus received meekly, and thereafter took additional precautions against discovery when he prowled by night. Mr. Budlong

enjoyed that long land cruise, notwithstanding the thousand and one discomfitures it entailed from first to last. For more than half a long lifetime, he had followed the sea, and during those years had been so devoted to his chosen profession that he had hardly given himself even a brief holiday, so he felt that he had earned a play spell, and was disposed to make the most of it. The cart gave out in some essential part about every other day, but the repairing of it was a diversion rather than otherwise; then he had his observations and log-book to take up his time; and, better than all, he was able to see for himself every day that his favorite was becoming something of a distinguished character in his new sphere, and more than fulfilling all he had prophesied concerning him. The old sailor had set out on this strange journey with no inconsiderable misgiving, but when he finally found himself in the Mexican capital, after it had surrendered to the invading foe, and the brief but desperately-contested war was over, he was fain to admit that he had spent, upon the whole, the jolliest year of his life, and that he was all the better for his experience with the soldiers.

CHAPTER XX.

Our war correspondent lingered for a considerable time in Mexico after its surrender to the United States forces, partly because the fallen capital, with its strange, tragic history, had a peculiar charm for him; and partly because he was not exactly satisfied what to do with himself for the moment, now that his avocation was gone. He intended to return to New York after awhile; and Mr. Claymore had written that there would be a place for him on the *Cor-morant* staff whenever he came to claim it; but, after his long

army experience, the routine of city journalism did not seem nearly so attractive as when he first roamed the streets in company with Shannahan, and partook of coffee and cakes at unholy hours with such infinite relish in the subterranean retreat, where the "press gang" was wont to assemble; Very far away that time then appeared to the young fellow, who had lived so long in so short a period; and very stale and flavorless the life that had once seemed so brimming full of incident and excitement. He would go back to that life, of course—for what else was there to do?—and become an even-paced plodder; but for the present he thought it expedient to forget the odor of burning gunpowder and the din of battle in a leisurely survey of the halls of the Montezumas.

There was no especial need of hurry, moreover, for his pocket was fairly well supplied, and Mr. Budlong's bag of coin held out like the widow's miraculous cruse of oil, while last, but by no means least, the balconies afforded a good many entrancing glimpses of dark feminine loveliness that were refreshing to eyes which for months had been familiar with such latent beauty as Prometheus and the wharf rat inherited.

The dark feminine loveliness, to be sure, was not very kindly disposed towards masculines from the States just at this juncture; indeed, *los Americanos* were at a sad discount with the señoritas, who transfixed them with vindictive glances from beneath the veil or *rebosa* at every convenient opportunity; but occasionally there was an after-glance which was not altogether venomous, and a faint sigh sometimes escaped from a fair bosom when some atrociously handsome fellow among the conquerors was near, indicating that the hate it felt bound to cherish against him was not quite implacable.

Steve did not flirt very desperately, considering the temptations at hand; but he displayed not a little ingenuity,

first and last, in outwitting some remarkably unprepossessing *duennas*, and managed to improve his Spanish amazingly in frequent surreptitious interviews beneath the stars.

Dear, dear! this recalls a certain dark beauty with whom I took bewildering walks many long years ago, and I pause for a moment to remove my spectacles and wipe away a tear.

I do not know what iniquity or absurdity our prodigal might have been betrayed into had his sojourn at the Mexican capital been unduly prolonged, but before he had time to seriously degenerate a new employment called him away, and Satan went in pursuit of another pair of idle hands.

The Mexicans, having been worsted in their set-to with Uncle Sam, found themselves mulcted in a big bill of damages, which, being deplorably *sans argent*, they had to settle by parting with a large slice of territory, a part of which not long after became known to the civilized world as one of the richest modern El Dorados, and attracted to its borders adventurers from about every race that maintains a foothold on the planet. A coast survey had to be made, and some meridians of longitude established in consequence of this transaction in real estate, and Colonel Tangent, of the Engineer Corps, was detailed to take charge of an important part of the work. The Colonel liked the duty, having a taste for scientific pursuits, and as he liked Steve, also, one of the first things he did was to offer him the position of private secretary.

"I intend to make you my chief assistant," he said when the tender was made, "but 'private secretary' sounds well, and won't ruffle the plumage of any of my official superiors, who might fancy I should give the place to some youngster with shoulder-straps. I will teach you to use the instruments, if you like, and you can keep up an occasional correspondence with the *Cormorant*."

"I'm a thousand times obliged, Colonel," Steve answered,

"and nothing in the world would suit me better, but I don't know that I can accept your offer; I can't abandon my friends, who have followed me so far, in this distracted country; to do that would be unpardonable."

"It would, indeed, Wayne, and there is no necessity for doing so; let them come with us if they like; I shall require a good deal of a party and can find room for them. Captain Budlong, by the way, may be decidedly useful; he is a first-rate navigator, I should judge by the way he handles a sextant, and navigation and engineering are first-cousins. Your cook and his assistant there will, of course, be use for."

"Then, if Mr. Budlong has no objection, I am with you, and the sooner we are off the better. You don't know, Colonel, how opportune this proposal of yours comes. I was expecting to go back to New York, and go to work on the *Cormorant*, but I have been roughing it so long that I do not feel much like settling down to city life; anyhow, I shall enjoy the wilderness far better."

"I think you're right, Wayne; the position I am offering you has decided advantages. To begin with, you can't very well spend your pay where we are going, and you can become a practical engineer, which may serve you to good purpose at some future time, and you can give Claymore a descriptive letter when there is a chance to send one, which ought to be of more than ordinary value to a wide-awake newspaper."

Mr. Budlong made no objections to the new arrangement; indeed, he expressed himself as more than willing to be on the way again, and, as neither Prometheus nor his comrade cared whither they went, an understanding was soon arrived at, and preparations for departure were commenced.

Mr. Budlong's cart was not called into requisition for the new journey, which was fortunate, inasmuch as one wheel rather resembled a rhomboid, while the other bore a family likeness to a scalene triangle, but it had rendered faithful

service, and the old man contemplated parting from it with something like a pang.

"It was a good craft, though it wouldn't go in stays worth a cuss," he remarked, feelingly; "it didn't ride easy, nuther, and the clatter of a windlass ain't a circumstance to the noise the darn'd thing made. I reckon I might as well turn it over to that Injun quartermaster, who is a tol'able honest chap for a Mexican, and the cattle with it, what's left on 'em, and call it quits."

A couple of ambulances were secured for such of the quality element as did not travel on horseback and the instruments, while a large army wagon transported the stores, camp equipage, and such of the commonalty as were steedless, and did not choose to go on foot. With instruments the party was well supplied. The now popular American transit had not come into use, if, indeed, it had been invented, but Tangent had a fine though ponderous English theodolite, and a Burt's solar compass, while Mr. Budlong was equipped with his sextant and chronometer.

Thus accoutered our friends left Mexico one fine morning, escorted by a small squad of cavalry, and set out on their long, arduous, and eventful expedition.

CHAPTER XXI.

Two years later the engineering party, wayworn but intact, was in San Francisco and upon the point of separating.

Colonel Tangent had performed the work assigned to him well, and might have fairly looked for promotion or some other substantial recognition of faithful service; but fate ordained that he should reach the land of gold just when the excitement incident to its discovery had reached the culminating point of insanity. Everybody was losing his head, and Tangent followed the fashion. He resigned his

commission, footed up his accounts, packed up maps and papers for transmission to Washington, and at the time when he is again introduced into this history was impatiently awaiting the formal notification that he was no longer in the service of the United States Government, but a private citizen, at liberty to go when he pleased, at his own expense, to the mines and secure, if luck favored, a speedy fortune with pick and pan, or to the devil, if ignominious failure awaited him, as it did such a large percentage of those who went in those days to delve in the earth for its riches. The Colonel had been most anxious for Steve to go gold-hunting with him, but our young friend's inclinations did not happen to run in that direction. He cared very little for money, which might have been expected, being a lineal descendant of Elder Wayne, who, if he cared for it at all, never learned the trick of keeping it; and, furthermore, life in the wilderness had begun to lose its charm, as it invariably does, except with savages, and he was in the humor to try civilization again.

Beside, he was really yearning to see home once more, though he had never admitted as much to himself—possibly was not entirely aware of it. His home had never been a very cheerful or pleasant one, and he remembered it with a good many heart-burnings, for which there was more or less reason; but his mother's face was always before him, and at this juncture attracted him like a magnet.

The two years just passed had been well employed, and he was infinitely the better, physically and mentally, for the wild journey he had taken and for the training he had received at the hands of the Colonel. He was as brown as a berry, with the sinews and endurance of a young mustang; he had gained a practical knowledge of the engineer's art, and was competent to take charge of a theodolite or level; he understood how to establish a meridian, and was fairly up in topography. It was no part of his plan to follow

engineering as a profession, for he was still true to his predilections for the press; but there was a certain and very pronounced satisfaction in feeling that he could turn his hand to another and honorable pursuit, should the pencil fail to produce satisfactory returns some of these times.

So he declined Tangent's invitation, and, with genuine regret, made up his mind to part from a tried and true friend, from whom he had learned much worth remembering, nothing that should be forgotten, and to whom he considered himself deeply indebted while he lived.

Mr. Budlong entirely approved of Steve's determination, which was not to be wondered at, for the old sailor was unutterably tired of his land cruise, and longed more than he could have expressed in words to see "blue water" again. He would have gone to the mines uncomplainingly had Steve determined to go in search of "pay dirt;" but when he learned that his favorite's thoughts were turning homeward, he rejoiced, for he saw a sea voyage in perspective.

"I'm glad you're of that way of thinkin', younker," he said; "we've had an everlastin' tramp, and I don't mind sayin' I'm tired on it. You've a notion to go hum, so have I, and it's time I went to take a look at Cooksaukie, on the Hudson, that I ain't set eyes on since '32."

"That's a long time to be away from one's native place, Mr. Budlong," Steve answered, thoughtfully; "I don't know as I should care to go back after such an absence."

"Well, mebby I shouldn't; but, you see, I left a sweet-heart there, Sara Jane Funkhowser; a tidy, taut-rigged gal, and she may get tired waitin', if I stay away much longer. I had a lock of her hair that I carried for a good many years; but the rats got it, blast 'em, along with my protection, one time while we was lyin' at Callao."

Steve screamed with laughter. "I don't believe any

sweetheart will ever wait for me so long," he said, "even if I wanted her to."

"Well, some women have stayin' qualities, and some hain't, that's a fact; but now the thing is to determin' about our futur' movements. My notion is to take the next steamer for Panama, and get back to New York by way of the Isthmus, as soon as we can. I shall feel like myself when I sight Sandy Hook again."

To this suggestion Steve had no objections to offer, so nothing remained but to wait for the first opportunity of departure, and then to say adieu.

Prometheus resolutely adhered to his old leader, but our friend the wharf rat was bewildered by some golden visions, and transferred his allegiance to Colonel Tangent, who would willingly have dispensed with his company; but this self-poised young gentleman was not in the habit of either waiting for an invitation when he wished to go or for dismissal when it suited him to leave. A day or two were spent in idling about the wild, lawless city, with its strange medley of inhabitants, and then came the hour of parting. Farewells and good wishes were exchanged from full hearts by these persons who had shared many hardships and adventures together, who had learned to regard each other warmly, and who were destined to meet in this world no more. Prometheus, to be sure, bore up wonderfully well, and when he wiped his eyes as he walked down the gang-plank of the steamer it was with a handkerchief adroitly purloined from Colonel Tangent's pocket at the moment of saying good-bye. The voyage of the home-goers proved uneventful, with the exception of a brief, though vexatious, delay at Panama; and in a little more than a month the wanderers landed in the Empire City, from whence they had sailed so long before, little guessing what was to befall them on the way. Mr. Budlong at once rolled off toward the sailors' inn on Peck Slip, for which he had first steered many times before, when

just returned from foreign parts, taking Prometheus with him, while Steve made his way, with a beating heart, up the well-remembered streets in the direction of the *Cormorant* office. Almost before he had time to understand his whereabouts he was swiftly climbing the familiar stairs; a few moments afterwards was in the reporters' room and struggling in the embrace of Shannahan, who was startled out of all sense of journalistic propriety by his unexpected advent.

"Bless my soul, Wayne!" he shouted, "did you drop from the clouds, or pop up from the nether depths? Where have you been for the last half-dozen ages? We had a letter from you two or three hundred years ago, dated at some unheard-of military post a thousand miles from anywhere, and all of us supposed that by this time your scalp was decorating the girdle of some noble savage, and your bones bleaching in the wilds of the unknown West. When and how did you get here?"

"By the Isthmus steamer, half an hour ago, and right glad I am to be in New York once more."

"And right glad am I to see you here. Wasn't it lucky that I fell in with you before you sailed on that gay old mahogany ship? You made a hit, and no mistake, with your war correspondence, and there are a dozen places open for you on the press, as soon as you feel like going to work."

"I hope one of them is on the *Cormorant*, Shannahan, for I shall never feel as much at home on any other newspaper. If I have achieved any success I owe it all to you and Mr. Claymore."

"Of course there is a place for you on the *Cormorant*, now, next week, next month, or next any other time. You're a howling favorite with Claymore, my dear fellow, and with all the rest of us, for that matter. Come along and see the boys; most of them are new-comers, but they all know you by reputation."

Steve "saw the boys." He saw Mr. Claymore, also, and

from one and all received a royal welcome. For the first time it dawned upon him that he had really made a mark in the world, and was regarded by those capable of judging as a writer who stood a fair chance of mounting to the top of the journalistic ladder, if he made no missteps, and continued as he had begun.

It is probable that more or less thrills of vanity tingled through his consciousness as he listened to the complimentary things his friends said, but if so, he was excusable, for he had earned the right to be complimented.

Shannahan, of the *Cormorant*, and our former friend, Mr. Charles Sherwood Dale, of the *Evening Hyena*, gave him an elegant champagne supper that night, at which he became slightly tipsy, but not maudlin. It was the first entertainment of the kind he had ever seen, almost the first he had ever heard of, so he was to be commended for keeping even approximately sober. He met and was presented to, that memorable evening, representatives from all the New York and Brooklyn dailies, and was the unquestioned lion of the hour. Dale told, under the influence of sundry bumpers, how he had gone to sea in an open boat, fought in a naval battle, and followed General Scott's army in its march through Mexico, and concluded his eulogium by proposing the health of the "nerviest reporter who ever put pencil to paper." Of course our lion *pro tem.* had to respond, and, considering he had never been on his pins before for such a performance, came out of the ordeal with colors flying, which might have been owing to some latent talent he possessed for postprandial efforts, and perhaps to the excellence of the vintage he had recently quaffed.

I should have mentioned before this that Mr. Budlong was there at Steve's special request, and the happiest man of the convivial party when he saw the young fellow, who had become the idol of his old bachelor heart, the recipient of all these social honors.

Away along in the small hours, Steve emerged from the mists which were beginning to enshroud his senses long enough to propose "the merchant service," which brought the old sailor to his feet, cleared for action. Amid a perfect broadside of applause, he spoke as follows: "Shipmates all, there's times when a fellow is just proud and no more; and then there's times when he has to bile over. I am in the bilin-over state of mind, and if I know what to say, damme for a marine; but this 'ere I want to mention: That younker there, that your holdin this 'ere service over, I sailed with on the briny deep, and traveled with on the land, and he's just my own flesh and blood, seein' as I hain't no flesh and blood of my own, bein' a single man through not maryin' my sweetheart, Sara Jane, in Cooksaukie, on the Hudson, as I had orter. Mebby this ain't just as clear as the log book, but what you lads want to understand is that Steve Wayne is a buster, and has twined hisself round this old heart of mine like the oak round the ivy. God bless him. Amen! Steward fill the can."

The assembled press gang greeted this effort of oratory with an absolute roar of approval, and another basket of champagne was exhausted before the hilarity it occasioned had, even in a measure, subsided; then Mr. Budlong was sent to his Peck Slip lodgings in the finest coach that could be found in the vicinity of the Astor House.

A full report of this symposium appeared in the columns of the *Cormorant* the next morning, and in those of the *Evening Hyena* the succeeding afternoon. Both of these sprightly publications reached Tadmore four-and-twenty hours before Steve did, and made mischief.

CHAPTER XXII.

Steve awoke at noon the next day with a conviction that the abnormal size of his head could only be determined accurately by triangulation, and had a grimly humorous notion of requesting Mr. Budlong to procure the necessary instruments and undertake the job, in the interest of exact science, but abandoned the idea out of deference to the age of his friend, and the magnitude of the work. Our prodigal had made his first elaborate sacrifice to Bacchus, and was paying the penalty in the proper order of events; an unpleasant necessity.

He had intended to start for Tadmire by the early North River boat, but that had been gone for hours when his heavy eyelids unclosed; and when he saw by his watch that this was the case, he was not in a condition to care particularly whether another boat left the next day or twelve months later.

He did not feel like encountering any of his newspaper friends on this occasion, having a strong suspicion he had made an ass of himself in some way, being unaware of the fact that if such was the case, the probabilities were that few, if any, of the party were exactly prepared to cast a stone at the glass house he inhabited; but he mustered up courage, after indulging in a cold bath and a cup of black coffee, to go in search of Budlong, feeling sure of a tolerably lenient judgment in that quarter.

He found the mate in the bar-room of his inn with a steaming jorum of rum punch before him, and a copy of that morning's *Cormorant* in his hand, which he was diligently perusing, bearing no more indications of any con-

vivial excesses about him than would be noticeable in the carved figure-head of a ship.

"Ahoy! younker," he said, when Steve stood before him, and at the same time lifting the jorum to his lips; "you've come aboard at last. I'm glad to see ye. That was a putty little carouse last night, though the temperance tippie they gin us didn't take hold of a fellow like honest West Inj rum, but your ship-mates meant to do the fair thing by ye, don't forget that, younker; and you was an honor to 'em. That speech of your'n was as good as a sermon, and here is the log of the whole carryin's on in the newspaper, includin' some observations of mine."

"Good gracious!" Steve cried, in dismay, "you don't mean to tell me that there's a report of our spree in the *Cormorant*!"

"That's jest the meanin' I was wantin' to convey; and, younker, they have done us proud. I never expected I would turn into a natural-born orator in my old age, but seein' is believin'; there's them observations of mine just as I made 'em. I didn't think it was in me to do it. Jest read this 'ere."

Steve glanced at the indicated paragraph, and read:

"At this juncture, Mr. Wayne, of the *Cormorant* staff, and the guest of the evening, was loudly called for, and responded in one of the neatest after-dinner efforts the writer has ever listened to. At the conclusion of his remarks he proposed 'The Merchant Service, as represented by Mr. Jerubdiah Budlong—A genuine friend, a thorough sailor, and an accomplished navigator.' The bluff old mariner replied in the following unique speech, which fairly captured the house."

Sure enough, the great effort of Budlong's life did follow.

It did not take Steve long to discover that the reporter had been kind to him. If he had made any blunders, there was no record of them, but on the contrary, it was made to appear that he had received with becoming modesty some

very complimentary attentions, and acquitted himself in one of the most trying positions a young fellow can very well get into, with pronounced credit.

"Thank the Lord for getting out of that scrape so easily," he muttered, with a long-drawn sigh of relief. "I don't remember more than half that happened, and felt like sneaking out of town before anyone told me that I had been playing the fool; but I won't trust my luck again. One frolic of that sort may do, but another might play the deuce with a fellow. I'll run home."

"You was remarkin'?" Mr. Budlong said, inquiringly, not catching the tenor of the foregoing monologue.

"That I must go home and see my mother," Steve answered. "I intended to have gone this morning, but overslept myself."

"And I'll go 'long with you as far as Cooksaukie, on the Hudson, younker. I should like to show Sary Jane them observations of mine; they'd sort of pacify her, I conjectur', for waitin' for me since '32, which is a powerful long spell for a gal to wait; there's no denyin' that."

"But suppose she hasn't waited, Mr. Budlong."

"Well, it won't make sech a dreadful sight of difference, because she was considerable cross-eyed and had a temper like seven bells; still, I have counted on Sary Jane's stayin' qualities."

At that moment a street gamin made his appearance and inquired for Mr. Budlong, and, when that gentleman was pointed out to him, produced a badly written and worse spelled letter. It proved to be from our eccentric acquaintance, Prometheus, and was a wail of anguish, for it contained the information that he was within the remorseless grasp of the law, charged—alas! truthfully—with the misdemeanor of abstracting from the stock of a street fakir a pocket-knife, a blacking-brush, and a second-hand copy of the Scriptures.

"I allus thought that cook's mate would steal most any-

thing he could get his flippers on," Mr. Budlong said, reflectively; "but I never did consate he'd have any great hankerin' arter a Bible. Still, there's no tellin' what kind of a twist a feller like that will take, and I'll go up to the police court and git him out and lick him, while you go and have a parting glass with your friends. Good friends they are, younker, one and all, and jolly chaps, too. I'd like to meet 'em all again some time, and mebbly I will."

"Of course, you will; and you may be sure they all took a fancy to you, and we'll have them to some sort of an entertainment when we come back."

Then Budlong went off to relieve Prometheus from du-rance vile, and Steve, pretty well freed from the apprehension of indiscretions committed, hastened to the *Cormorant* office to make some arrangements for the future and bid his friends a temporary adieu. There was no difficulty about the business transaction he had in mind. Mr. Claymore bade him return, as soon as he conveniently could, and take a position under Shannahan, who was now promoted to city editor.

The next morning our friends took their departure, according to programme, and journeyed in company as far as Albany. There they separated, Budlong to go to pay his long deferred visit to "Sary Jane," Steve and Prometheus to go on to Tadmore.

Railway traveling was not quite as expeditious in those days as at the present time, but a little before noon the following day they alighted at a station a few miles distant from their destination, the rest of the trip having to be made by carriage.

* * * * *

The *Cormorant* and the *Evening Hyena* had continued to bear to Tadmore occasional tidings of the runaway, whom all the villagers remembered, while the war continued, and there were letters from him at irregular intervals in the columns of the former, dated from various places never heard of

before in that rural region, for some time thereafter; then he ceased to write, and for several months nothing was heard of him, through the press or in any other way. Gradually the impression grew in many minds that he had met his death somewhere in the great Western wilderness which he had seemed to be traversing with a scientific exploring party. The younger members of the community, with whom he had always been a favorite, spoke of him to each other with more than passing regret; the older and more piously inclined referred to his case as an exemplification of the Scriptural assertion that the wicked prosper but for a season. But the New York dailies still came to the old Tadmore addresses, and were still scanned by whoever could obtain access to them eagerly, but with less confidence as time went on and brought no news of the absentee.

On the day that our wanderers reached the end of their railway journey, *en route* for home, the village sewing society was to meet, by previous appointment, at the residence of Mrs. Wayne. The ladies of Dr. Adamant's congregation thought a deal of these gatherings, and seldom absented themselves when it was possible to be present. They did not sew very much, and no one ever knew exactly who was benefited by the little work that was done, but they exchanged a world of soulful confidences, mostly relating to those little social scandals in that and adjoining communities that Christian ladies take such a profound delight in discussing.

On the present occasion Mrs. Deacon Foss reluctantly came to the conclusion that she could not meet with her sisters. She had been ironing all the morning, and was unconscionably tired; besides, her old enemy, the rheumatism, had got hold of her again, and, finally, her new Sunday shoes, which were six-and-a-half when they should have been sevens, hurt her corns cruelly. So the good lady donned a pair of easy list slippers, a linsey-woolsey short gown, and

sat down to read the newspaper, which had just been brought from the post office by the "hired help." She read the lists of deaths and marriages carefully through, scanned the advertisements of one or two dry-goods stores, and perused with rapt interest the details of a murder in New Jersey, and then, as she carelessly turned the sheet, her eye caught the name "Stephen Wayne," and in a moment she was deep in the sprightly account of the champagne supper.

Mrs. Foss forgot her weariness and her rheumatism in a moment. The short gown was whisked off and was replaced by her best alpaca; her feet were thrust into the new shoes without a groan, though the anguish was exquisite, and in five minutes by the clock, she was trudging toward the Wayne mansion, with the agility of a modern letter-carrier, the newspaper safe in her work-bag. Gossip was flagging when Mrs. Foss arrived, and comparative silence prevailed; that is, only seven or eight ladies were speaking at once, each upon an entirely different subject and in a different key. Mrs. Wayne, who had been a confirmed invalid for the past year, lay with closed eyes upon the old hair-cloth sofa, trying not to appear bored to death, while Grandma Wayne, with her society spectacles on, occupied her chair of state and attempted to interpose as moderator now and then, but with indifferent success. The Elder, being a wise man, had gone to the woods for the afternoon.

News, and important news, was written in every lineament of Mrs. Foss' face when she took her seat in the midst of the company, and twenty pair of eyes were turned upon her expectantly.

"Well, what is it, Sister Foss?" Grandma Wayne said; "there's no use keeping us waiting, you know."

"I've learned something, ma'am, that you may or may not like to hear, but I thought it my duty to tell you, and, I hope, I always try to do my duty. Sister Snoop, do give me a

pinch of snuff. I hurried off and left my box, and you know how a pinch of Scotch clears one's faculties. Sister Balaam, where did you get that dress pattern—it's the prettiest thing I've seen this fall—did it come from Smith's or Ichabod's?"

"We're not at all anxious about that news, Sister Foss, that we may or may not like to hear," Grandma Wayne said, with superb satire; "any time this afternoon will do, and of course you're not dying to tell it."

"Why how you do talk, Mrs. Wayne; let me ask, has the Elder heard from his son lately?"

The mother started from her recumbent position, and every vestige of color faded from her face. "You know we've not heard from him," she said, "except through the newspapers, since he went away. What do you know of him? Is he alive or is he dead? Do tell me—don't keep me in suspense."

"He is alive, Mrs. Wayne, if that is any comfort to you, and he has got back to New York, but, I am sorry to say, he has fallen into dreadful, dreadful company. He has—"

Just then there was a rattle of wheels on the gravel outside, a close carriage came tearing up the drive and stopped near the horse-block. On the box beside the driver sat a brawny, snub-nosed youth, muffled in a rough overcoat, while from the inside sprang a darkly-bronzed, handsome young fellow, wearing a great shadowy slouch hat and a Mexican *poncho*.

"Who on earth can that be?" Sister Foss said, staring through her spectacles.

"I know," Mrs. Wayne cried, "it's my son; it's Steve come back to me!" and the next moment she lay fainting in his strong arms.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The members of the sewing circle could hardly be blamed for feeling that it would have been considerate, to say the least, in the young gentleman to have deferred his return for an hour or two, thus affording them an opportunity of hearing what Mrs. Foss had to communicate, and of discussing it dispassionately; but then, he had not timed that event to suit their convenience, and as Grandma Wayne looked as though she would esteem it an especial favor if a motion to adjourn was made and unanimously carried without loss of time, they began to look for their wraps as soon as the hostess was out of her fainting fit, and able to bid them a languid adieu. Most of them uttered some vague words of conventional congratulation as they took their departure, but not so the spouse of Deacon Foss. She felt, with considerable reason, too, that she had been basely defrauded out of the opportunity of her life to create a sensation, and her anger was kindled. With one withering glance of concentrated indignation at the unconscious spoiler of her plans, she marched out of the house silent and dignified, as a good woman should be who has been badly treated, but intends to forgive the indignity as soon as she can. Dignity upheld her as far as the front gate, then physical misery obtained the upper hand. Those awful shoes seemed suddenly to shrink to half their original dimensions, those awful corns to enlarge proportionately, and she could endure no more. She pulled the shoes off, uttering some intense feminine imprecations to facilitate the operation, and then the unregenerate had the sinful pleasure of seeing a stout, middle-aged lady defiantly pur-

suing her way through the principal thoroughfare in her stocking feet, bearing a new pair of commodious shoes in her hand, and the indications of smoldering wrath in her face.

Mrs. Foss remembered that promenade in bitterness of spirit when she subsequently related to a select company of her friends what she had learned, or saw fit to imagine she had learned, about the iniquitous doings of her neighbor's son, who arrived so inopportunistically after such a long, mysterious absence.

Steve's reputation suffered horribly in consequence of those shoes and that walk; but upon such trivial events, momentous affairs frequently turn.

Tadmore had something to talk about for a day or two, and its tongue wagged as it had never had a chance to do before. The suddenly-disbanded sewing society reassembled in several places during the following twenty-four hours; and at these reunions all the details of that bacchanalian carousal as published in the *Cormorant* and *Evening Hyena* were talked over, together with the details of much more wickedness which might have happened on the same occasion, but, owing to circumstances over which the ladies had no control, had not. The older and more unprepossessing sisters, who had drawn their prizes in the matrimonial lottery, or who had pretty nearly abandoned all hope of doing so, as the evening of life drew on apace, were very denunciatory of all young men who permitted such honors to be paid to them; while some of the ewe lambs—under thirty—who still had occasional visions of lovers and wedding tours, ventured to hint cautiously that perhaps one might be the recipient of a champagne supper without reaching the more hopeless depths of moral degradation. It came to pass, therefore, that Tadmore society was presently divided into the "Steve" and "anti-Steve" factions; the former made up of the

juvenile element, who considered it rather a splendid thing that a native Tadmorian should go out from among them, wander over the unexplored earth, and come back to tell them of the wonders he had seen; while the latter, composed of the staid and morally-poised, thought, with something akin to horror, of the dreadful example one venturesome prodigal had set for the rising generation to emulate.

All, however, were actuated by a common curiosity; they wanted to see this wonder among modern travelers, and to ascertain, moreover, whether any fatted calf was likely to suffer death in consequence of his unexpected reappearance. Curiosity did not have to prey upon itself for any great length of time, for next morning he appeared in public. Ah, me! how impressive, in the broad-brimmed hat and Mexican *poncho*, while with him was the Elder, wearing his Sunday coat and a new air of pride and consequence.

"This is my son, just from New York," he said, by way of introduction to one new-comer. "My son was through the Mexican War," he remarked to another, and "My son accompanied a Government survey through our newly-acquired territory on the Pacific Coast," he explained to a third, and all who overheard knew that the calf was doomed. But the pride of the father in the newly-returned stray sheep was as nothing in comparison to that which his mother felt. She fairly gloated over him, and could hardly endure to have him out of her sight for an hour. With what love ineffable she watched him from the old hair-cloth lounge, which she seldom left, noting every change that time and exposure had wrought in his face and figure; how breathlessly she listened to the recital of his adventures, which to her seemed so strange and manifold; how she clung to his neck when the good-night kiss was exchanged, those who have had loving mothers must imagine, for such scenes are too sacred to be portrayed for the careless reader of

commonplace fiction, and I would not describe them if I could.

Grandma Wayne, too, acquired a little additional imperiousness of manner when she spoke of her grandson, and put on her society spectacles every day.

Steve's old chums and school-fellows fought a little shy of him for a while: he had been so far, seen so much, and was altogether such a tremendous fellow, from the rural standpoint, that it seemed impossible to find any common ground of meeting; while the village maidens looked out their prettiest ribbons and devised ravishing spit-curls for their temples when they thought there was a possibility of meeting this celebrity, who had once—if rumor was true—bellowed when, as a punishment, he had been seated among the girls at school.

I am afraid he put on a good many airs and graces, which set many a little Tadmore heart fluttering, and, if he interlarded his conversation with a considerable variety of Spanish phrases, who shall blame him, for did he not naturally wish to retain the knowledge of this flowing language which he had been at no small trouble to acquire?

Mr. Walworth looked him up in short order, the reader may be sure, and was vastly pleased with his appearance and improvement. So impressed, indeed, was the pedagogue with the variety and extent of the information he had picked up in his travels that he invited him to lecture in the chapel of the Academy, from the same rostrum where he had once stood, blushing violently, while he recited in a squeaky, tremulous voice, "Friends, Romans, and countrymen, lend me your ears."

Steve accepted the invitation, reserving the privilege of selecting a theme, and felt that his honors were indeed culminating.

In one respect, however, he disappointed a number of very youngladies and horrified a good many old ones. He

declined point blank to go to church, declaring roundly that he had had enough of Dr. Adamant's sermons to last a lifetime. So he missed some very pointed references to himself, with which that eminent divine garnished his morning discourse the Sunday after his reappearance. The Elder, who for the first time within memory failed to appear in his pew at the last stroke of the bell, missed them also. Possibly he had a suspicion of what he might have to listen to if he sat under the droppings of the sanctuary that day.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The American sovereign is never entirely sure of any intellectual superiority he may suspect himself of possessing until he receives a formal invitation to lecture. He may occupy the exalted position of alderman in his ward; he may have been a delegate to his party conventions; a representative in the State Legislature or Congress; elevated to the gubernatorial chair, or to the presidency even, without demonstrating, beyond peradventure, to his own or anyone else's satisfaction, that he is not an ass masquerading in a hide more or less like a lion's; for political preferment, alas! very frequently comes of political trickery.

The lecture invitation, however, settles the matter beyond cavil; it is a patent of intellectual nobility which no one has ever been found bold enough to call in question, and it is for this reason that for forty years, or thereabouts, I have been hoping that some literary society would call upon me to utter words of wisdom in its presence, at one hundred dollars per night. Our friend Steve, therefore, had a right to feel a good deal elated when Mr. Walworth afforded him an opportunity of emerging from a doubtful position and taking his place on high. He did not like to limit his *flight to any "pent-up Utica"* of a subject, and selected

as a theme "Mexico and the Recent War." He devoted some fifty pages of foolscap, to telling what he knew about that land of romance, and the causes of its late embroilment with the United States' authorities, taking care to embody a handsome eulogy upon the administration of Colonel Polk, as he felt in duty bound to do, considering himself still attached to the staff of the *Cormorant*, one of the staunchest of administration organs.

The essay was not a masterpiece of eloquence or erudition, but it was a creditable effort, fully equal to the Tadmore standard, and some rather momentous results followed its delivery.

I have incidentally mentioned, in a preceding chapter, Steve's elder sister and her admirer, Mr. Sweet, a divinity student whose life had frequently been rendered burdensome in consequence of the youngster's pranks. Mr. Sweet was not precocious, but he had the organ of stick-to-it-iveness well developed, and was still laboriously tunneling his way through a solid course of terribly tough theological reading, hoping to pass his examination some time in the misty future. In the meanwhile he earned a precarious livelihood by the sale of religious books, which he weekly carried in a market-basket from door to door. Miss Wayne had never been enthusiastic over her adorer, and might have sent him to the "right about" some time before, had not the rest of the family regarded him in the light of a mild nuisance, and kept a faint glimmer of pity, which is said to be akin to love, alive in her heart, by making fun of him on all convenient occasions. He used to preach at the school-house occasionally—to empty benches, chiefly—and the young lady could not conscientiously say that his discourses gave promise of future greatness. Still, he served passably for a lover, when no one else was by to suggest an unfavorable contrast.

The young Levite was expected in Tadmore the week after Steve's return, to conduct the Wednesday evening prayer-

meeting, and Miss Wayne was not overjoyed at the prospect of presenting him anew to her traveled brother, and when she learned that a younger sister, who was absent at a pretentious boarding-school, was coming home to hear the lecture, accompanied by Miss Stella Snow, the beauty and heiress of the institution, and a rising young lawyer, also, that had been somewhat assiduous in his attentions to the younger daughter of the house, she felt something very like consternation, especially after learning that Steve, in a spirit of mischief, had determined to run opposition to the prayer-meeting by delivering his lecture the same evening. Of course, Miss Wayne would prove her loyalty by accompanying Mr. Sweet to the school-house, but she doubted seriously whether very many more of the young people would be alike considerate.

Mr. Sweet and his basket of books arrived on Tuesday morning; the younger Miss Wayne and her companions in the evening. Steve was amusing himself and horrifying the divinity student by professing a strong predilection for the Roman Catholic faith, when the boarding-school delegation with its escort put in an appearance, and a moment later he stood face to face with Stella Snow, a tall, lovely blonde, and forthwith parted company with his wits. He had a vague impression that someone, his sister, probably, was favoring him with a tremendous hug, together with a number of emphatic kisses; also that a good-looking young gentleman shook hands with him in a decidedly paternal way; also, that a perfectly modulated voice murmured something which sounded like, "So pleased to meet you, Mr. Wayne;" but he was by no means certain of anything, save that his heart was thumping like a trip-hammer, and that most of the blood of his system was surging to his face. It was a very bad case of love at first sight, and if our young friend did not act like a fool for a brief space, it was not because he did not feel like one.

He never knew how he got through that most memorable evening; how he managed to survive the agony he suffered. Such a peerless beauty must, as a matter of course, have a myriad of lovers; what more likely than that some one among them had gained her heart, and would eventually claim her hand? This was almost too dreadful to contemplate. He felt that if there was any such fortunate individual he must hunt him down, murder him in cold blood, and then go out and hang himself, like Judas Iscariot. The fair head, to his excited imagination, seemed to be overshadowed by a species of visible Shekinah that filled and glorified the old parlor, with its worn, shabby furniture, and he was sure that in all the world there was not another face so lovely. Oh, dear me, how he envied his sister, who sat beside the divinity, with an arm round her waist, after the effusive manner of boarding school friends, and he determined, if he could get his sister off in a corner, that he would kiss that happy arm.

The evening finally drew to a close, the young ladies withdrew, and Steve went to his bed, but only to toss in wild delirium until away into the small hours. Then kind sleep visited him, and he had bewildering visions of blonde hair, blue eyes, and of some indescribable Land of Beulah, through which he wandered with an angelic creature, who bore the lineaments of Stella Snow.

CHAPTER XXV.

The young lady who had so completely taken possession of the affections of our ex-war correspondent, was the only child, consequently the prospective heiress, of Mr. Zicazal Snow, a peculiar specimen of that remarkable American product, a self-made man.

Mr. Snow had not fashioned himself attractively, estheti-

cally speaking, but he had been phenomenally successful in the accumulation of money; and money, more certainly than charity, hides a multitude of sins—poverty the most unpardonable one among others.

He was not a genial gentleman, indeed, he rather abhorred most of the human family, and had only such intercourse with mankind as the exigencies of business necessitated. A familiar associate he had never had and did not want. There was no money in such acquaintances, and with sentiment he wished to have no dealings. He knew absolutely nothing about his ancestry beyond his father, for whom he had no particular liking. He cared nothing about it, and despised everyone who pretended to cherish family traditions. He had gained his own great fortune by downright, unremitting toil; he regarded as swindlers those who sought any shorter or easier road to wealth. He disliked whatever was beautiful in nature or art, and cordially hated those who surrounded themselves with beautiful things, thus squandering money which might otherwise have been hoarded. He was an uncompromising puritan in religion, and considered all who did not subscribe to that narrowest of creeds as worse than pagans.

For the rest, he was a man of strong intellect, undeviating integrity, so far as payment of just dues went, with many dislikes, few, if any, real affections, and an inborn love of making people unhappy. How he ever came to marry, was one of the unsolvable mysteries, but marry he did a sweet, beautiful woman, of a good, though impoverished, family, who bore him the one daughter, and then, thanking God for her release, died, leaving Zicazal Snow a widower and happy—but for the little one.

Of the little one, however, he came to be proud in a grim, surly way, as time went on, and she grew into a beauty of no ordinary promise. He almost loved her, too, when he *discovered, later, from various small indications, that she*

was as emotionless, almost as destitute of affection, as himself.

Mr. Snow freely afforded her every educational advantage that money would procure, and, having a good mind, Stella was, when Steve first saw her, thoroughly accomplished, far better prepared, in fact, to occupy a chair in a ladies' college than to adorn a home as wife or mother.

Steve was told a good deal about Stella Snow and her paternal proprietor in the course of a chat, which he contrived to have next morning, with Mr. Dan Hudson, the young attorney upon whom his sister Jenny had a lien. Hudson had a sympathetic perception of what was passing in his prospective brother-in-law's heart, and, as he knew a good deal concerning the Snow family, as he did about many other things, gave our young friend much of the information I have given to the reader, and some hints he had better have borne in mind.

"You're dreadfully smitten with Miss Snow, I see," Hudson said, "and she is certainly a stunning girl; but her father is an awful old bear, with whom—let me tell you, in all sincerity—no one belonging to an old family like yours, aristocratic to the very core, could, by any possibility, get on."

"You seem to forget," Steve said, "that, if I am in love with Miss Snow, as, of course I am—what is the use of denying it?—I need not necessarily be infatuated with her father. I don't want him, by Jove! and I don't want his money."

"That's all right, Wayne; but Miss Stella wants his money or somebody else's money. She will never have an abiding love, my boy, for anything save the almighty dollar, remember that; she was reared in that faith, as you were in the belief that the Wayne family antedates the deluge, and she will stand by her dollars, as you will stand by your lineage, in any emergency that may arise."

"I don't suppose a poor devil of a newspaper *attaché* will be much of a catch for the young lady."

"You're right, it would not, though she might think so for the moment. You can earn at your calling, in which you have gained a really extraordinary rank considering your experience, what would satisfy some nice womanly girl, such as your mother was years ago, or——"

"Or such as sister Jenny now is," Steve said, with a sardonic grin.

"Well, yes; such as sister Jenny now is—a girl I shall be most proud to call my wife by and by—but that kind of an income, let me tell you, won't suit Miss Stella Snow. She has been used to having no end of money at her command, and she is not the girl to come down in her own estimation."

"Hudson, I'm obliged to you for the compliments you pay my mother and sister, and they are deserved, but I don't see, I swear I don't, why this young lady, who was born to better fortune than we were, can't have the same womanly instincts you attribute to them."

"She was born to an infinitely less fortune, let me tell you, Wayne, and she can't have those instincts because she did not inherit them, as your mother and sister did. But woo and win Miss Stella if you want her."

"That's all very good to say woo and win her, when you've just been telling me she would have nothing to do with a fellow unless he could give her a palace."

"I have said nothing of the kind. I have said Miss Snow would not be contented for any great length of time, with a man who did not have a good deal of money. I say that yet; but also, that she is very likely to be dazzled incidentally with a good-looking young fellow, like my friend Wayne, particularly if he had been rambling about the world, cutting no inconsiderable figure, and especially if he *had demonstrated* the fact that he held the pen of a ready writer."

"I don't see what you're driving at, Hudson."

"Then let me try to explain myself, for goodness' sake. Women, especially young women who are called well educated, have a predilection for writers, as a rule, and every Eve's daughter of them looks with a great deal more than ordinary interest upon a chap who has been through such a series of adventures as you have and come out with *eclat*. I should say your lecture to-night ought to complete her capture, unless it is more stupid than I imagine."

"I hope it is not quite stupid, but I do not suppose it brilliant enough to impress anyone particularly. It is what it is, however, and must do me a little credit, or prove me a blockhead, as the fates will."

"You're going to score success; I feel it in my bones, Wayne, but take this hint, go over your manuscript two or three times to-day; get it well in hand, and to-night never mind the rest of us, but lecture to Stella Snow, and you will be sure to do your best."

The suggestion was a good one, and Steve acted upon it. He retired to the barn, where he had been invited by his father upon several dismal occasions in other days, and delivered the lecture, with one or two meek-eyed cows and a span of horses that had seen the vanity of all things years before for auditors; but, all the same, he had a mental vision of a fair face, with a wealth of golden hair, for the smallest curl of which he would have exchanged the mines of ancient Ophir had he possessed them, with a little "boot" also, had it been necessary to close the deal.

The all-important evening came all too quickly, and, with a beating heart, he set off for the Academy Chapel, like the apostle of old, not knowing the things that should befall him there; but Stella Snow's hand rested on his arm, and in a perfectly-modulated voice that admirably-poised young lady chatted of the last fashionable novel, and quoted some *mild lines* from Mrs. Hemans, to all of which he listened

like one in a dream. Jenny and Hudson accompanied them, and Miss Wayne longed to be of the party, but her embryo divine was to utter burning words elsewhere, so, with a sigh, she prepared to follow his fortunes.

No impatient crowd awaited Mr. Sweet at the school-house. Dr. Adamant, with his wife, Bathsheba, was there to listen, mayhap to criticise. Sister Snoop was there also, likewise Miss Prudence Tishbite, who, after figuring as a giddy, wayward girl for nearly sixty fleeting summers without securing a manly heart to which her young affections could be confided, had turned aside from worldly things to become one of those brightly-burning religious lights that perpetually warn sinners away from the coast-line of perdition. This was all; the rest of Tadmore's population, young men and maidens, old men and matrons, the elect and the unregenerate, had thronged to the Academy Chapel, filling it almost to the point of suffocation. For the first few minutes after Steve made his obeisance he did not know whether he was in the wilds of Mexico or engaged in another boat fight on the Cuban lagoon, whether he was Steve Wayne or the Shade of Theseus, or anything else, with certainty. He saw a blaze of light and a sea of faces, and thought he heard a hollow, agonized voice saying, "Ladies and Gentlemen," but was not sure about it. He recovered his equipoise, however, after a brief but distressful period, and began to warm to his work, then the consciousness dawned upon him that he was securing the attention of his audience, then he saw a lovely face, wreathed in blonde tresses, turn toward him, wearing an expression of rapt interest, and then he knew that his success, for that evening at all events, was assured.

So, as a matter of fact, it was, and at the end of an hour he sat down amid a storm of applause that nearly upset him. Presently, half the dignitaries of the village, Mr. Walworth *among the rest*, were swarming over the rostrum, shaking

him by the hand and saying more complimentary things than Tadmore had ever said or thought of him since the stormy winter night when Dr. Graves ushered him into this world of vicissitudes, and his triumph was complete.

He was wearing his blushing honors quite becomingly, taking all the circumstances into consideration, when a brawny, grizzled, old seafaring man, shouldered his way through the incense-burners and fairly clasped him in his arms.

"Why, it's Mr. Budlong!" Steve cried, delightedly, while the others drew back a little; "how on earth did you get here?"

"Yes, it's me, younker, jest in time to see ye doin' yerself proud again, and I wouldn't have failed of bein' here on this here occasion for the command of the biggest Ingyman afloat."

"You could not have come at a better time, my old friend, or when I would have been more rejoiced to see you, but what sent you to Tadmore?"

"Well; I came mainly on your account, younker," Mr. Budlong answered, complacently. "You see, Sary Jane didn't have the stayin' qualities I was countin' on. I found her alive and comfortable, living with her third husband, old Deacon Van Schoovenhosen, and she had named seven boys runnin' Jerubdiah for me, but they died, one after another, in convulsions, which made her to think the name was unlucky, and for the last dozen year she had been callin' her boys George Washington, Gineral Jackson, and sich, which seemed to agree with them better."

Mr. Walworth and one or two others shouted with laughter, while Miss Stella's lip curled ever so slightly.

"I suppose this is a little amusin', as I tell it, shipmates," Mr. Budlong proceeded, "but it made me feel sort of down-hearted and lonesome like, so I thought I would come and look up this younker that I've been cruisin' around with

for a considerable spell and see how he was enjoyin' his liberty."

"You found a hearty welcome, at all events, sir," Steve said, "and you will go home with me, of course?"

"Of course," acquiesced the Elder, promptly, "this——ah——nautical friend of my son's will be more than welcome to such hospitality as I have to offer."

"I thank ye, kindly, sir, and I wouldn't mind swingin' my hammock atween your decks for a day or two, but mebbby you and these other gentlemen would join me in a glass of rum first at the tavern I noticed as I warped into port."

A dreadful hush fell upon the company, and some meaning glances were exchanged between the staid ones, but the Elder was equal to the occasion; and, promptly linking his arm in that of the old mariner, he led him away, and was followed at once by his own family party.

Steve had Stella to himself again on the homeward walk. The young lady was a trifle reserved at first, and asked an icy question or two about "that very singular person," but she thawed presently, and transported her escort to the seventh heaven of happiness by speaking the words of praise he so ardently longed to hear from her lips. How it all came about he never knew; but, borne away upon a great tidal wave of passion, he told Stella of his newly-awakened but overwhelming love, in such thrilling language as I believe, for the moment, really touched the girl's heart. Anyhow, she did not say him nay, and if she did not give an exactly acquiescent response, nevertheless left him that night with such a mighty happiness surging through his heart as almost stopped its pulsations.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Some consequences followed the lecture episode, which, for a season, threatened serious trouble.

Mr. Sweet was only mildly aggrieved over the smallness of his audience at the school-house, being accustomed to similar experiences, but Miss Wayne felt spiteful, not because no more people came to attend upon the ministrations of her Levite, but because she had a very strong conviction that he did not possess the mental power to attract any more numerous congregation, and, during their homeward walk that night, hinted at a dissimilarity of tastes which would render it advisable for their paths to diverge thenceforward, whereat Mr. Sweet lifted up his voice and wept.

Dr. Adamant, however, was furious, and the following Sunday morning preached a tremendous sermon, chiefly denunciatory of professors of religion and church officials who neglected the Wednesday evening prayer meeting for the purpose of hearing a godless boy relate how he had wandered about the world, in defiance of paternal authority, in what kind of company could be easily inferred from the dissolute specimen of humanity who had broken in upon a recent gathering in that village, and proved what manner of man he was by inviting people previously considered respectable to partake of rum at a tavern.

At this interesting point of the discourse an unheard of thing happened; Elder Wayne arose, with a decidedly angry flush upon his face, and quietly marched out of the church, followed by Deacon Foss, Elder Balaam, and several other *leading members* of the society, who were manifestly not

inclined to tamely submit to a public reprimand administered in such round terms, when the example of rebellion had been set by such a prominent fellow-sufferer.

The afternoon service was thinly attended—'as, indeed, all other services were for a long time then next ensuing—but those who did put in an appearance were treated to an extempore effort, compared with which the written sermon of the morning was milk and honey. The rebellious ones came in for a terrible scolding, and for weeks thereafter a spirit very widely removed from brotherly love pervaded that community of Christians. Many of the young people, who had often smarted under injudiciously pointed references to various follies incident to youth of which they had been guilty, found a sinful enjoyment in this state of affairs, while a few kind souls, who had found in that spiritual desert a flowing spring of genuine Christian charity, such as the Holy One of Bethlehem had drank of when he bade the erring woman, "Go, and sin no more," prayed in their secret chambers that God would compassionately teach His professed followers how to follow Him.

Our friend Budlong obtained something of an inkling of the esteem in which the Reverend Doctor held him; but it did not disturb him much. To use his own expressive language, "the parson had got an ugly slue to port, and would be all right when he rode on an even keel again."

The old mariner was having a very comfortable time of it, notwithstanding this casual unpleasantness. The Waynes made much of him; a little because the Elder's combative spirit was aroused, a great deal because the entire family recognized the fact that he had been the true, faithful friend of the son of the house when as a young, inexperienced wanderer, at variance with his kin, he stood in need of one.

Many hours Mr. Budlong spent seated by the old hair-cloth lounge, where sweet Mrs. Wayne reclined, recounting

the manifold merits and virtues of the son of her heart, whom he loved with an affection scarcely less abiding. He had a sympathetic listener in the mother, the reader may be sure, who forgot all of his grotesqueness because of the love he bore her boy, and when he went to the tavern at seven bells, which in this instance meant half-past eleven A. M., for his rum and water, he was sure to meet some one of Steve's admirers who was willing enough to listen to any panegyric he might feel disposed to utter concerning his favorite, or to a tale of the ocean from his own varied experiences.

Miss Stella Snow, however, was not one of Mr. Budlong's admirers, and was at some trouble to snub him politely when he attempted to discourse to her of Steve and his perfections. His rude, ungrammatical speech, his *outré* manners, and his rough pilot-cloth suit of navy-blue found small favor in her eyes, which, beautiful as they were, lacked the keenness of vision which would enable her to detect beneath the surface the sparkle of the pure, though uncut and unpolished, diamond.

She half wished she could like Budlong, on Steve's account, for the young fellow, with his handsome person, his unconsciously aristocratic bearing, and, above all, the fame he had won, first as a reprobate, resentful of home discipline, then as a reckless fighter, then as writer for the press, then as a speaker whom people swarmed to hear, had led such fancy as she possessed completely captive, and when he renewed his love-making—which you may be sure he did at the earliest possible moment—she referred him to the paternal Zicazal in some proper phrases uttered in a voice the tones of which were as perfectly modulated as those of an Æolian harp.

Neither of these young people then thought of the supreme absurdity, to use no stronger terms, of entering upon a matrimonial engagement predicated upon such an utterly insufficient knowledge of each other. *How many,*

many make the same dreadful mistake and regret it so un-availingly when it is too late for regret.

Of course, Steve was well-nigh delirious with ecstasy when that little word "yes" was spoken, and yet, as he held Stella in an embrace for the first time, and was permitted to impress the first kiss upon her cheek, he felt that there was something wanting. He had a miserable suspicion, born of some of Dan Hudson's hints, perhaps, that her heart would have beat somewhat more tumultuously at the reception of an elegant solitaire or the title deed of a mansion on one of the aristocratic residence streets of New York. Like many more of us in this unsatisfactory world, he was not exactly sure, after winning the coveted prize, that it was quite as priceless as he had imagined it to be. Our young friend had been perfectly frank in acquainting the lady of his love with his prospects and plans for the future. She knew he intended to go back to the *Cormorant* office upon a salary which seemed to mean a fairly comfortable living in an unostentatious way; also, that he hoped, as so many another young journalist has hoped delusively, to earn something worth while outside his regular work, by miscellaneous writing for the magazines and weeklies. This supplemental fund would be convenient when a new dress or a new article of furniture was required, and Stella had considerable faith in a sudden diverging of the prosaic road her lover had marked out for himself into those marvelous domains of fortune where certain great gifts are always awaiting Aladdin and a few other lucky individuals.

So our heiress did not wince when Steve spoke of the prospective struggles he saw before him, nor did she demur when he suggested an early marriage, having no more real idea of what was in store for her as the matrimonial sharer of a small income than of how the Esquimaux construct their ice huts or hunt the walrus. While life in the great metropolis looked marvelously attractive—from a distance

—it did not occur to her that that life would be gladdened by few glimpses of the *beau monde*, where wealth and fashion holds its carnival; that there would be few opera boxes, no seasons at Saratoga, at least for some time to come; few presents of jewels from Tiffany's—in fine, any privation that ready cash would not alleviate, was to her an absolutely unknown quantity.

Hence the bitter disappointments that came later on.

Steve had known something, but not much, about skir-mishing to make both ends meet in earlier days, still since his exodus from the home roof he had never known what it was to be actually pressed for money, having encountered some exceptionally rare fortune. It is one thing to rough it by one's self, however; quite another to do so in company with a society girl who had never had to count shillings.

The Waynes learned of the successful issue of the young gentleman's suit in Cupid's court with less enthusiastic satisfaction than might have been anticipated. The Elder was, upon the whole, disposed to think the boy was making a good match from a worldly point of view. The young ladies were inclined to the opinion that Stella would be a nice sister. Mrs. Wayne blessed her son, and wished him every happiness, but could not find a blessing to bestow upon his idol, while Grandma, in family conclave, austere-ly declared the whole thing absurd, and prophesied no good would come of it.

Still no one interposed any downright objections.

The few in Tadmore society who knew Mr. Zicazal Snow, personally or by reputation, hinted to each other that Steve would encounter some very serious difficulties when he came to present himself to the sire of his beloved as a candidate for the position of son-in-law, but these croakers were destined to be disappointed. Mr. Snow received the blushing lover with grim good nature; listened with a sardonic grin to his protestation of undying affection, and told him so

take the girl and welcome, if he wanted her, but to expect nothing more.

The knowing ones thought they understood Mr. Snow's complacency, when, a week after Stella's ridiculously hurried marriage, he closed his pretentious mansion; sold off his furniture, and went to board at a cheap restaurant, finding sleeping accommodations on a lounge at his office.

CHAPTER XXVII.

While Steve's bliss was still young, and there was a guest chamber in his heart at the disposal of any of the vast army of unfortunates who could never have a realizing sense of what true happiness meant, because they could never be the accepted lovers of Stella Snow, he bethought him one day, after Stella had returned to her home, in an adjoining county, and he had nothing particular to do, that he had caught no glimpse of Prometheus since the night of his return, and set off to look him up.

He found him in the back-yard belonging to the Stebbins residence, which consisted of two rooms and an attic, dejectedly sawing wood, and, spiritually speaking, far down in the gloomy valley of humiliation.

A somewhat minute explanation ensued, in the course of which it came out that Prometheus had been the victim of some excessively cruel circumstances, over which he had been unable to exercise the smallest control. He had arranged in his mind during the ride from the railway station a decidedly dramatic return to the bosom of his family, but the arrangement had not been carried out in a single detail. He had not exactly determined to burst in upon his loved ones in the gloaming, and fall upon his father's neck, for the reason that Stebbins senior stood six feet five in his stockings, while Stebbins junior stood five

feet six in his boots. But he did make his way into the general room without the formality of rapping, and came face to face with his sire whom he found perusing an old newspaper while enjoying his evening pipe. The elder man did not permit any surprise he might have felt at this unexpected apparition to get the better of the solid, practical side of his character. For the undeterminable fraction of a minute he gazed at his offspring, then, without a word, arose, collared him, and escorted him to the kitchen, where he administered a substantial chastisement, making use of a barrel stave for the purpose, after which he ordered him to bed, and calmly resumed his evening's recreation.

This eccentric reception led Prometheus to believe that he had unfortunately arrived at a moment when his father was under the influence of a fit of ill-temper, as in fact he frequently was, but he cherished the hope that, having thrashed him to his heart's content, natural affection would resume its sway in the morning, enabling him to pose as a returned adventurer who had a career full of dark, unmentionable secrets. But it was not so to be; the elder Mr. Stebbins was calm and self-possessed when he hauled his son out of bed at daylight, but he declined to believe that the latter had been out of town, refused to listen to the most remote hint of any foreign adventures in which he had taken a part, and, the instant a plain but wholesome breakfast of mush and milk was dispatched, set him to sawing wood in the back-yard.

Mr. Stebbins followed the avocation of a day laborer when he followed any that society looked upon as legitimate, but he was out of employ when his son returned, and, having a few months before lost his wife, was occupying his leisure in housekeeping upon a primitive, inexpensive scale; so, as there was nothing to prevent, he sat at the kitchen window with his pipe, superintending Prometheus' operations at the wood pile, during the day, promptly ordering

off any youngsters who might feel disposed to enliven the wood-sawing with a little friendly gossip.

The salutary plan thus promptly devised for keeping our erratic young friend out of mischief, by finding constant occupation for his hands, was adhered to with inflexible pertinacity, and, if Prometheus did not find that period in his history enjoyable, his father did, beyond doubt.

This also may be mentioned in passing: Mr. Stebbins had taken instant possession of the portmanteau with which the heir of his house had returned equipped, that contained many cherished souvenirs of Mexican battle-fields, and of these Prometheus saw no more. Some valuable trinkets found their way to the establishment of a venerable Israelite, who carried on a mysterious jewelry business in a neighboring village; a few others still repose beneath a glass case in the library of Colonel Obadiah Stebbins, previously mentioned in this history, who remarks to visitors after dinner that they were presented by a relative who played no inconsiderable part in the Mexican war as *aid-de-camp* to General Scott.

"It's too deuced bad," Prometheus whimpered, after communicating what I have related, "and what I'm going to do is more than I know."

"You're going to stay right where you are, and saw wood," observed Mr. Stebbins, who had sauntered out of the kitchen in time to catch this last wail; "you ain't of age for three months yet; until you are I'm going to see that you don't sneak off agin, and come back with a cock-and-bull story of havin' been to sea, and to Mexico, and the Lord knows where, along with young Mr. Wayne, here."

"But he really was with me, Mr. Stebbins," Steve said, with difficulty controlling his laughter.

"It's good-natured of you to say so, and to try and save his feelin's, but it don't stand to reason, Mr. Wayne, that a *young gentleman* like you would go roamin' over the 'arth

with a critter like him, who don't know enough to come in when it rains. I know all about it; he's been livin' like a darned bear in a holler tree, somewheres, eatin' acorns and poke-berries; he's got tired of that sort of fodder and come home to fill up; so he shall, too, but he's got to earn his victuals."

"If you'll only listen a moment I can certainly convince you, Mr. Stebbins."

"Well, I don't care about bein' convinced, havin' made up my mind," the elder man said, with a malicious twinkle in his eye, "and, if you please, don't take his 'tention off his work, though if you want to fool away half an hour talking to him, I've no objections. Keep the saw movin', Prometheus; you can saw and talk, and you've had quite a restin' spell."

Mr. Stebbins slouched away again to resume his post of observation at the window, leaving Prometheus ready to cry with vexation and Steve almost convulsed with merriment. The latter did his best, however, to elevate the drooping spirits of his whilom follower, but without much success; so, promising to see him again, if possible, before leaving town, he slipped a couple of dollars into his hand and went his way.

Meanwhile, it was generally known through Tadmore that the returned prodigal son had captured the heart of old Zicazal Snow's heiress, and many were the comments that this news occasioned. Steve's own partisans, who were numerous by this time, congratulated him right heartily; the austere devout, who believed that all sins, save their own, should meet with swift retribution in this world and eternal punishment in the next, declared it to be a shame for this unrepentant reprobate to gain the hand of the richest as well as the prettiest girl in the region, whom he would be certain to despoil sooner or later.

Preparations for the wedding were going on, nevertheless,

though it was to be a quiet affair, at the residence of the bride's father, without bridesmaids, orange-blossoms, or other useless extravagances, with only a few intimate friends and relatives to witness it.

It seems passing strange that no one of the many sensible people who knew this young couple; who were aware of the young fellow's want of fortune; of the young lady's great expectations; who knew how very slight their acquaintance with each other was, and how illy prepared they were for the duties about to be assumed; did not urge a halt; but no one did, and one of the most ill-advised marriages ever entered into was duly celebrated.

It was rather a dreary festivity, and not twenty people were present, to either rejoice or be sad. Steve's family were there, with the exception of Mrs. Wayne, unable from her infirmities to attend; and Budlong was there, resplendent in a brand-new suit of blue pilot cloth; and Mr. Snow looked in for a few moments, long enough to formally give the bride away and to order the company to be served with cider and doughnuts after the twain had been made one flesh.

When the happy ones drove to the railway station, half an hour later, Stella carried her father's parting gift in the shape of a cheque for \$10.00, while Steve had in his pocket a little package thrust into his hand at the moment of parting by Mr. Budlong, which, upon examination later on, when he had time to think of things terrestrial, was found to contain a certificate of deposit on a New York bank for \$500.00.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Upon the second anniversary of the wedding, when cider took the place of wine and doughnuts did duty for bride-cake, *Stephen Wayne*, sadly aged in appearance and more

heart-weary than I could describe if I would, sat in the front room of a dreary second floor in Williamsburg that he had called home for a season.

It was rather a parody upon "home," as that word is understood by the delicately reared. Still, the apartments were comfortably, if plainly, furnished; the locality was respectable, if not elegant; and there were none of those abiding horrors, slatternly servants, ill-kept front steps, and dirty stair-cases, which characterize those forlorn localities where those with whom the world has gone wrong take refuge after making up their minds to part company with cleanly surroundings.

Steve's love-dream was over. It had lasted with unabated vividness for three months, existed as a reminiscence for six months more, then he thought of it as a possibility of the future for something like a year; then all hope of domestic happiness died the death, and *hic jacet* was written above its grave.

All this had come about quite in a natural order of sequence. A girl, *parvenu* from the soul outward, who had been taught, from the first dawn of intelligence, to worship money as the one thing worth having, had, in a moment of infatuation, wedded with the scion of an old family that had lost the money-changer's art of turning shillings into pounds, because its male representatives for generations had been devoted to scholastic pursuits, scientific research or literature, varied by an occasional dash into politics. Of course, disappointment had followed. What other result could have been anticipated?

Those whose impulses lead them to money-getting for the sole sake of possessing money, have, as a rule, small sympathy with those who gravitate, through inherited taste, to the college cloister, the scientist's laboratory, or the writer's study, and *vice versa*; but the fact remains that these classes are useful to, not to say dependent upon, each other, and self-interest

generally suggests toleration. Toleration, however, is a poor substitute for affection in the family circle.

For a time Stella was charmed with her new life. The modestly-furnished apartments that were tasteful and attractive, if not luxurious, formed a pleasant contrast to the great desolate mansion, with its costly furniture, always hidden from the gaze of the world in covers of brown Holland, where she had spent most of her life, while the bright, genial young newspaper writers who dropped in to chat with Steve and turn pretty compliments for the bride of an evening, were a tremendous improvement upon the solemn old owls whom Zicazal occasionally brought home to a very plain dinner, and who discoursed heavily upon the rise and fall of "Erie stock," the wheat crop prospects, and the last Secretary of the Treasury's report upon the financial condition of the country. Quite frequently Mr. Snarl, the musical and dramatic critic, favored them with complimentary tickets to the theater, once or twice with an order for a box at the Italian opera, where our lovely blonde had an opportunity for displaying some of her wedding finery, as well as her charming face. Besides, it was evident to her that Steve, in addition to being well thought of by his *confrères* in a general way, was regarded by them as a young fellow of a good deal more than ordinary promise, who was likely to make his mark sooner or later, and who might carry off one of the great journalistic prizes in the end.

Something to this effect Mrs. Claymore, who had, of course, obtained her views from her liege lord, hinted when she called in state upon the bride, accompanied by Mrs. Grundy, who matrimonially managed the managing editor of the *Evening Hyena*, and Stella felt confident that she was not only entirely happy, but desperately in love with her young husband also.

It was about this time that she made him the subject of an extravagantly eulogistic letter to her father, indulging in

some very tropical expressions of affection, over which the venerable Zicazal grinned in derision, while partaking of a repast of liver and bacon at his favorite restaurant.

But by and by the novelty began to wear off; the pretty furniture, purchased with Mr. Budlong's generous wedding gift, lost something of its attractiveness; Steve was often detained at the office away into the small hours, and was consequently sleepy next morning. On several occasions, too, when the theatrical orders came from Mr. Snarl, he was detailed to report the ponderous utterances of some aspirant for congressional honors at a ward meeting, and could not accompany her, which entailed a dull evening, with some repining over a lot that did not seem to be entirely *couleur de rose*.

These were trifles, but others followed in their wake, and, together, made up a decidedly disagreeable whole. The bridal *trousseau*, for one thing, began to exhibit signs of wear, or rather to be a little *passé* in style, and there was difficulty about promptly remedying such evils. Steve worked hard, earning a fair salary, but what with rent, fuel, and servants' wages, together with bills of the butcher, the baker, and the grocer, it was pretty well absorbed, leaving not much for the replenishment of wardrobes, or to be expended in amusements. Furthermore, our young friend never did understand the trick of purchasing a dollar's worth with a dollar, and he had the Wayne facility for spending money a good deal faster than he could earn it, but he was still desperately in love, and almost painfully anxious to keep his pretty bird plumed *à la mode*, to gratify every wish of her heart, spoken or unspoken. With this end in view, he took to writing, first for the weeklies, afterward for some of the minor magazines. He had had unusual experiences to draw upon for material, his style was attractive, and his work found ready sale at fairly remunerative prices for those days; but that kind of work had to be done outside of

his regular business hours, and absorbed much time which should have been sacred to sleep or other recuperation. He had a desk in his sleeping-room, where he delved, while Stella crocheted or looked out of the window, thinking of her old life, when she reigned an acknowledged belle, and finding the present very dull and flavorless.

She did not complain much, and treated him to no exhibitions of downright temper; still he suspected her of being discontented, and was sure of it when Mr. Claymore one day proposed to send him as a correspondent to South America, where his knowledge of the Spanish language would render him especially valuable, for an indefinite period; and Stella promptly advised him to accept the proposal, while she would save expense by paying a visit to her father during his absence.

There was only a *faint* flavor of regret in the voice that made this practical suggestion, and it struck Steve's heart with a sudden chill, but he accepted it without serious demurrer—half in pique, half because he saw the worldly wisdom of it after a little consideration; so the pretty apartments were dismantled, the furniture went to the auction rooms, and with the proceeds of these household goods Stella went on her way rejoicing.

But the parting was tender enough to pass muster even between people so recently introduced into the marital heaven, and Steve, at least, was well-nigh broken-hearted at the thought of the impending separation, under circumstances which, hope as he would, struck him as ominous. He escorted Stella to the Albany boat, and then, because he could not quite manage to keep the tears from his eyes, and, being ashamed, after the manner of all men, old or young, to be seen weeping by his associates, he spent hours wandering through a variety of the most unsavory streets of New York, where there was little danger of encountering an *acquaintance*, hugging his sorrow to his bosom. In the

gloaming he put in an appearance at the *Cormorant* office, confident that at this busy hour no eyes were likely to notice any outward signs of mental perturbation, being then engaged in the serious duty of life—preparing “copy.”

The next day he sailed for the Isthmus, and two weeks afterward was sauntering through the narrow, tunnel-like streets of Panama, that curious old Spanish city which possesses such a strange attraction, all its own, that whoever once resides there feels an almost irresistible inclination ever after to return and doze away the remainder of his existence within its crumbling walls. He was only awaiting the departure of the next ship bound for Valparaiso, the immediate theater of his journalistic exploits, but the few days that he spent there and thereabouts, among some of the most picturesque ruins to be found in the Western World, overgrown with every description of rank tropical vegetation, made an impression upon his mind that was never obliterated, and in after days he recalled that brief experience, and imagined, above all things, that he would like to repeat it.

He spent nearly a year on the western coast of South America, and gained some fresh professional laurels. He wrote Stella as frequently as the irregular mail service permitted, receiving reasonably prompt responses. The lady's letters were models of elegant chirography and couched in perfectly correct language, but Steve searched through them in vain for any indication that she sorrowed over their separation, or pined particularly for his return. As a matter of fact, Stella was not pining at all, having found the time passing very agreeably at her native village. The venerable Zicazal, who always proceeded by the rules of contrary, received her with something approaching a cordial welcome; he inquired, with his characteristic sneer, if Steve had gone to South America with the notion of buying it, if it suited him, and then, not only to her amazement, but to that of every one else, reopened the old mansion, refurnished it

from top to bottom regardless of expense—although it is worthy of mention that a furniture dealer in town had contrived to become indebted to him in a considerable amount, which he was dubious about collecting—and established her there, with practically *carte blanche* to do about as she pleased. She pleased to queen it, and had a right royal time, all things considered. Her lady friends inquired politely as to Steve's whereabouts, and she replied that he had been promoted to the foreign correspondence staff, and was then abroad, which sounded well, and would have sounded better but for the fact that Mr. Snow, when similarly interrogated, was in the habit of responding, with his characteristic grin, that he believed young Wayne was negotiating for the earth, with a notion of laying it out into town lots, on speculation.

The impression, therefore, was soon general that Steve had proved a stupendous failure, and had been obliged to send his wife home because he could no longer care for her.

At the expiration of ten months Wayne fell ill with a South American fever, and asked permission to return to recuperate. He had done good service; he liked a residence in South America; and it was understood at the *Cormorant* office that he was to go back there and take up his permanent abode after a brief furlough.

Stella learned, with no particular satisfaction, that he would be in New York at a certain date; also the details of his programme for the future. She was not at all enthusiastic over the prospect of a residence in South America, nor did she much like the idea of leaving the old mansion again, where she had enjoyed much larger latitude than was ever accorded her in the days of her maidenhood. But, nevertheless, she prepared, with tolerable grace, to go to Steve, as he could not conveniently come to her, being engaged in compiling his *Cormorant* letters for publication in book form.

"I suppose you might as well go and see that brilliant genius of yours," old Zicazal said, with his habitual sneer, when she mentioned her determination; "most likely he'll be glad to see you, after a year at the other end of the world, unless he's come across somebody he likes better; and I hope he's got some sort of a shelter for you. But I guess I'll keep the old house ready, in case you want to come back, and I shouldn't wonder if you did, because these geniuses have a way of going hungry which don't count much, because genius, I'm told, feeds on itself."

With this kindly farewell thoroughly impressed upon her memory, Stella took her departure, and in due time was enfolded in her husband's embrace. The enfolding occurred at the Williamsburg apartments, mentioned at the commencement of this chapter, which Steve had thought well enough to suit his temporary purpose, but which seemed to Stella insufferably mean, not to say insupportable, after her recent taste of grandeur. For the first time in her life, she was thoroughly disgusted with her surroundings, and took no trouble to conceal the fact, even during the first few days of reunion.

Steve's heart sunk within him; he had counted so much upon that reunion, and it had turned out such a miserable Dead Sea apple. He had—notwithstanding occasional premonitions of evil days, so far as his domesticity was concerned, to come—pictured a bright future, with Stella in love with him again, as she had been during their brief courtship season and early married life; but now his horizon looked cloudy, and he felt unhappily certain that a storm, perhaps a disastrous one, was brewing.

The event proved that this foreboding was well founded. After two months of almost ceaseless repining, Stella proposed another visit to her father, before their departure for South America, and Steve could not consistently object, especially as she professed to have received an invitation.

accompanied by a cheque to meet the expenses of the journey.

Still, he saw her depart with many misgivings.

A week later came a letter from her, stating in concise terms that her father had offered her a certain home in a civilized country for the uncertain one which he had promised in a semi-barbarous one, and bidding him a final farewell.

I have seen that letter—the most cruel as well as the coolest a husband ever received from a wife. I do not believe it was Stella's composition, although unquestionably in her handwriting. I suspect that Zicazal Snow dictated the missive, with the characteristic design in view of making one person, at least, supremely wretched. If this conjecture is correct, he succeeded admirably. Steve was utterly broken down, and for a time scarcely in possession of his senses. He wrote a wild letter, imploring Stella to reconsider her determination. It was returned, with a few lines declining further correspondence; then he gave up, with a curse upon all womankind, and might have done almost any desperate, foolish thing under the smart of the moment. But, happily for him, just at this critical period of his history, his true friend Budlong returned from a China voyage, and came to the rescue with some sound advice, as well as with a world of sympathy.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Mr. Budlong had taken to the sea again, not through financial necessity, for he had saved money enough to meet such needs as he was likely to have during the remainder of his life, but because he did not know how else to dispose of himself after Steve cast anchor in that fair, but not always safe, haven—matrimony—and was, consequently, lost *to him*.

He was well assured that he would be always welcome to any home the young fellow called his own, and it would have suited him to have remained on shore at his ease, after so many years of hardship in every quarter of the world, but he had a strong conviction that Stella did not exactly approve of him, and that, of course, closed Steve's doors. So, with an unusual heaviness of heart, he turned his face seaward, and before Steve noticed his absence, with a lovely bride to occupy his attention, was in blue water again.

It is doubtful whether any voyage had every seemed so dreary to Budlong before. He missed his young friend sadly, and, when his ship at last returned to port, lost no time in looking him up.

Very much distressed the old man was, if not entirely surprised, to learn what had befallen the young fellow, whom he had left two years before so full of enthusiastic belief in the future, and he at once took upon himself the office of comforter.

"I needn't say that I'm sorry to hear such news, younker," he said, "for you orter to know that without my sayin' it, and maybe I've been just a little afeared at odd spells that you want goin' to have quite plain sailin' on the v'y'ge you started on."

"You can't mean that you anticipated such trouble for me, Mr. Budlong?"

"Well, no; that is, not such an out-and-out shipwreck; but, ye see, I kind o' conjectured, from my experience with women, that your gal—a pretty creature she was, too—didn't have stayin' qualities. She somehow looked to me like a craft that would be middlin' well afore the wind with a good spread of canvas, but wouldn't heave to when it come on to blow a gale; howsomever, she's just as she was made, and had to act accordin' to natur'; but now, my lad, what are you goin' to do?"

"I don't know; go to the devil, most likely, and the sooner the better, so far as I can see."

"There might be some excuse for marines talkin' that sort of nonsense, because, naturally, they wouldn't know no better, but it don't sound well comin' from you, my lad, because you hadn't orter think of doin' anything unmanly. You've been caught in a nasty squall, and lost your spars, but the hull's all right; go to work, rig jury-masts, and continer the v'y'ge like a true sailor, who, when he gets into a scrape, knows that the next thing to do is to get out of it, without wastin' time."

"All that is vastly easier said than done, Mr. Budlong."

"So it is, younker, and it's a good bit easier to talk about anything than to do it, but we've got to do things in this 'ere world, and keep on doin', and never give up the ship as long as she is above water."

"Don't preach, my good old friend; I know you mean well, and what you say is, of course, all right, but I can't bear it, at least not now. There's one thing you can do, however, which will do more good than anything else, and that is to stay with me till I can pull myself together a bit."

"I'll do that, younker, with all my heart, and the Lord willin', see you safe through this trouble afore we part company; splice hands on that."

Steve grasped the hard hand extended to him, with deep emotion; he knew it was the hand of as faithful a friend as a man ever had; one that would serve him to the utmost extent of its ability.

Had Wayne been older or more world-wise he might have found it comparatively easy to be guided by the homely, though sensible, counsels of the old sailor; but, as it was, the more he looked at the situation the more completely hopeless it appeared. Many another man has been deserted by a faithless wife, under circumstances quite as heartless, *and has borne* it with an equanimity that, to the world,

seemed undisturbed, but he was not of the number who could hide intense feeling beneath a cool exterior. Both his love and his pride had been wounded, as he believed, past remedy. The woman whom he had worshiped with a mad idolatry had turned her back upon him, in order to secure a more luxurious home than he could at the moment afford to give her, and, in so doing, stained an ancient, honored name, that had never before been in like manner tarnished. All the world knew, or would know, of this unspeakable disgrace, he fancied; his friends would condole with him; his enemies and those who were simply indifferent would point the finger of scorn; and condolence and scorn would be alike unendurable.

From such a standpoint, but one course seemed open to pursue—namely, to flee the presence of those who knew him, and hide his sorrow and mortification among strangers.

It is rather a difficult matter to hide on this little planet, but of this fact our unhappy young friend was not then aware.

Steve had no occasion to tell his friends at the *Cormorant* office that he was in trouble, for his face revealed the fact plainly enough, but he had to tell what the trouble was, to guard against uncomplimentary conjecture, when he called upon Mr. Claymore to say that he must send someone else to South America, because he could not return there. For a moment, he had thought that in the Southern Hemisphere he would find just the asylum he most desired; and then he remembered that, in the South American city where his headquarters were to be established, he had a multitude of acquaintances to whom he had been in the habit of speaking of his young wife, who would accompany him on his return, and what explanation could he make to these if he went back alone? A cool, clear-headed, middle-aged man of the world might have been able to contemplate such an emergency and provide for it, but Wayne was an inexpe-

rienced pilgrim on the rough journey of life, and never suspected that by far the greater number of the lions one encounters on the way are chained and powerless.

Claymore and Shannahan both endeavored to convince the young fellow, for whom they had a sincere regard, that it was the part of manly wisdom to forget the woman who had cast aside his heart, as in childhood she had cast aside a dilapidated doll when the patron saint of children brought her a new one at Christmas, and go resolutely forward in his chosen calling, which advice was unqualifiedly endorsed by our worldly-wise young friend, Mr. Dale, of the *Evening Hyena*, but it is open for doubt whether either of these gentlemen would have been governed by the advice he gave, had he been the recipient of it under similar circumstances. However this may be, Steve listened with the best show of interest he could muster, acknowledged the wisdom of the suggestions, and arranged his future to suit himself.

Of journalism he had suddenly grown heartsick; for literary work he had lost all taste, and, as a matter of course, pretty nearly all ability; but, while moodily considering where and how he should earn his bread, he bethought him of the profession in which he had attained something like proficiency under Colonel Tangent, and his resolution was taken. In the great Northwest, toward which the immigration and much of the enterprise of the world were tending, there was, or ought to be, employment for a passably accomplished civil engineer, and, in various parts of that region, he also knew, as a journalist, that the matrimonial bond could be readily severed for a large variety of causes, while in New York an absolute divorce could only be obtained in consequence of an offense which Stella had not committed and was incapable of committing. From Stella, however, he was determined to be legally free. The passionate love he had felt for her had given place to a sentiment of utter detestation. She had been, in his estimation,

the loveliest of her sex; she was now the most despicable, not so much because of her coldblooded murder of his affection as for the blot she had caused upon the family escutcheon, in which he gloried, and that family name she should not lawfully bear any longer than he could help it.

Whether this course would be right or not, from a moral standpoint, he was too resentful to inquire.

Wayne took no one, save Budlong, into his confidence, touching these designs, after they assumed tangible shape in his mind, nor did he enlarge upon the divorce phase of them, even to him. It was as well, perhaps, that he did not, for this sturdy old mariner, while entertaining many free and easy notions, after the manner of his class, held strenuously to the old-fashioned opinion that what God has joined together man has no authority to put asunder, save for the gravest cause.

Budlong thoroughly approved of Steve's scheme, as he understood it, and, without hesitation, proposed to take a part in it. To arrive at this decision necessitated a good deal of self-sacrifice. He had been offered, unexpectedly, the command of the Indiaman upon which he had made his last voyage as executive officer. It had been the ambition of his life to command an East Indiaman. But this youngster, who had found the place of a son in his childless heart, was in dire tribulation and might go to the bad, unless someone was at hand to uphold him when he faltered, to stand his friend after his young wife, following the example of the priest and Levite, had passed by on the other side, leaving him half dead by the wayside.

So Budlong let pass the one opportunity of his life to earn the title of "Captain," which he coveted, in order to do what he could to save from destruction—that so often follows upon the heels of overwhelming calamity—a young fellow, not of his own blood, whom he had come to regard with sincere, and therefore unselfish, affection.

I do not, for a moment, imagine that this rude sailor would stand very high in the esteem of many divines who minister to prosperous congregations of Christians, but the lowly founder of Christianity, who never ministered to a prosperous congregation, has said to the Budlongs of all ages, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, my children, ye did it unto Me." That is a declaration, believe me, brother sinner, which will count tremendously in the day of final reckoning.

Steve had a few hundred dollars, for a wonder, still to his credit, and from this resource he purchased a theodolite, a level, and such other appliances as were essential to a civil engineer's outfit. He also picked up *Flint's Survey* and *Davies' Engineering* and spent a week or two in brushing up his trigonometry and in testing his instruments, with Budlong acting as rodman, in the then open region between Williamsburg and East New York.

From an excursion of this kind, he returned one evening, to find a forlorn figure, clothed in unpicturesque tatters, sitting upon the front steps of the abode from which Stella had taken her flight a month previously.

"Damme, if it ain't that cook's mate come back!" Mr. Budlong exclaimed, upon catching sight of the forlornity. "I don't want to intimate that Providence misses stays once in a while, but, if I'd had the orderin' of events, I should have gathered that critter to his fathers, if he had any, about the time his ma made up her mind to wean him."

"Why, it's Prometheus!" Steve said, with something akin to pity in his voice; "where the deuce did you come from?"

"From nowhere in particular, Ste—, Mr. Wayne, I mean, and I ain't got nowheres to go, if you wont have me," Prometheus answered, exhibiting a strong inclination to whimper.

"Well, don't cry, whatever else you do," was the rather

unsympathetic rejoinder; "you can stay with me if you like, of course, while I've anywhere to stay myself. Get into the house and, if you haven't forgotten how, get supper."

CHAPTER XXX.

Prometheus was inaccurate in stating that he had come from "nowheres," for, as a matter of fact, he had come from the penitentiary at Auburn, where he had been sojourning about eighteen months, in consequence of an indiscretion. There is, however, an existing prejudice in society against people who take up their abode in that commodious State institution, so our friend was excusable for being reticent as to his residence there.

Circumstances had got the better of Prometheus again, after his last interview with Steve at Tadmore, as circumstances have a way of getting the better of many more of us. He had been kept at the wood-sawing pertinaciously by his sire until the evening preceding the twenty-first anniversary of his birth; then that excellent old gentleman remarked, after smoking out his third pipe:

"I say, Prometheus, to-morrow you'll be a grown man, and I shan't have no control over you by law, but we wanten part like dad and son orter; step into the kitchen."

Prometheus did so, and was promptly treated to a horse-whipping, after which the exemplary head of the house of Stebbins kicked him out of doors, and told him to go to the devil.

Prometheus celebrated his liberty by stealing a blind horse that had picked up a precarious livelihood on the village common, since his early recollection, with which to escape out of a country that had become distasteful to him, but he would better have made his exodus on foot, for the steed was not fleet, and a newly-elected constable, who was

ambitious to become a great detective, saw him appropriate the animal and ride off. The alert official lost no time in swearing out a warrant for his arrest, and before he had gone a mile had him in custody, manacled, as such a desperado should be.

The old horse did not happen to be worth anything, but that did not signify. A rural grand-jury found an indictment against him for grand larceny, upon which he was tried, convicted, and sent to prison.

Upon the expiration of his sentence, he had adroitly filched a watch from the pocket of the prison chaplain, while tearfully listening to some good advice that gentleman was giving him, relative to turning over a new leaf and atoning for one false step by a life of undeviating rectitude. The watch he pawned to the president of the Reformed Convicts' Association, for a few dollars, with which he started for New York, to hunt up Steve, who was probably the only person in the world whom he really cared for, and undoubtedly the only one who, knowing him, would afford him an abiding place. Mr. Budlong was by no means inclined to allow this social barnacle to attach himself to Wayne again, but upon this point the latter was obdurate.

"He left a home, such as it was, in the first place, to run away with me, because I asked him to go," Steve said, "and it is possible, if not probable, that in this way he spoiled his chances of becoming a decent common laborer. Anyhow, the fellow is attached to me in his way, and I won't turn my back on him while he is disposed to cast in his fortunes with mine."

"I ain't a goin to say you're altogether wrong, my younker," Budlong replied, "and we shall want a cook, I conjecter, on this 'ere new land cruise we're goin' on; so take the cuss if you want to; he may get shot or hung afore long, and we can pray for that, along with other blessins' we stand in need *on, when all hands are piped to tend prayers.*"

So Prometheus was once more formally enrolled as Steve's follower, and, a few days after, accompanied him on his flight to the prairies of the Northwest.

Steve longed to stop at Tadmore *en route*, for a word of sympathy from his mother, but could not muster up the courage to do so. The news of his domestic disaster had reached Tadmore, he felt assured, long before, and been thoroughly canvassed by Sister Snoop, and Sister Balaam, in sewing circle conclave assembled, to his discredit, he did not doubt; so he proceeded to do the worst thing he could have done; he gave his home the go-by, without a word of explanation by letter even, and disappeared from the cognizance of his kin, very much after the fashion of a fugitive from justice.

Meanwhile Mrs. Stella was not finding life all sunshine and roses. Her father had received her with his characteristic, sardonic grin, asked a sneering question or two about South America, and when she proposed journeying thither, after which he established her in the old mansion, to the lady's inexpressible satisfaction. But Zicazal was a genius in the art of tormenting, as Stella discovered a little later. No sooner did he ascertain that she had really abandoned her husband, and built up such a barrier between them that reconciliation was the next thing to impossible, than he rented the great mansion, furnished, to a railroad magnate who wanted just such a pretentious place for the summer months, and quartered his daughter in one small, meanly-appointed room, over the restaurant, where he procured his meals, and advised her to take in sewing if she stood in need of pocket money.

I doubt whether mortal woman was ever more thoroughly enraged without being able safely to exhibit her temper, but Stella appreciated the situation and governed herself accordingly. She displayed a good deal of taste in the adornment of her one room; the hideous colored paper window-shades were

replaced by white muslin curtains, neatly looped back, while the dry-goods box that did duty for a washstand, was covered with cheap, pretty chintz; which, thus transformed, became an attractive piece of furniture; and she pretended to have found employment as a seamstress in the family that occupied the old mansion.

Her meals were sent from the restaurant, and she accepted without gainsaying whatever rude viands Zicazal ordered for her. She made it a point, also, to be invariably busy over some very plain sewing whenever her kindly-disposed father, decorated with his sardonic grin, paid her a visit to inquire how she enjoyed herself.

It may be that in those days of humiliation Stella sometimes thought of the home and the husband she had deserted, and a suspicion might have crossed her mind that she had made a bad move in the game of life, but she had made the move, and must abide by the consequences, whatever they were, and Zicazal Snow's lands and money, which might be willed to some charity bearing his name did she offend him, should be hers if feminine patience, endurance and ingenuity could compass that end.

Of course, no social taboo followed her to the unpretending room over the restaurant, for the daughter of the eccentric rich old man could live anywhere and do anything—almost—without loss of caste, and quite as many of those who delight in falling down to worship the golden calf called upon her in this retreat as in other times when she held court in the drawing-room of the old mansion, then rented.

I am sorry to have to record that, wearying for the moment of her room above the restaurant, she had the execrable taste to visit Tadmire and endeavor to renew her intimacy with Steve's family, and I am still more sorry to record the almost incredible fact that some who were related to him in blood received her with approximate cordiality. Grandma Wayne was not of this number, the reader

may be sure; she knew no more than rumor had told of the separation or its causes, but she stared at Stella without a symptom of recognition when she encountered her on the street, and Mrs. Wayne returned unopened a prettily-worded note of inquiry as to the state of her health, while the Elder, who had left his spectacles at home, failed to observe her as she tripped lightly down the steps of Dr. Adamant's church after morning service.

But there were plenty of golden calf worshipers in Tadmore, as there are in every other municipal corporation of the civilized world, and they paid servile tribute to the faithless wife, who chanced to be the daughter of a brutal old capitalist, Zicazal Snow.

Ah, me! what a multitude of golden calves are set up everywhere, and what a vast congregation of the "chosen people" fall prone before them, wherever they are exhibited. This is a digression, and I should apologize for turning aside to explain for a moment the depths of obsequiousness to which the human race will descend, when the god Money from his throne sways his scepter and commands his followers to touch with their foreheads the dust upon which he deigns to walk.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Steve's luck stood by him, when he accompanied the Star of Empire on its western way. He reached a certain town of the Northwest—which, after the manner of Northwestern towns boasting of more than three hundred inhabitants, called itself a city—at an auspicious moment, just when a "boom," as we say in these days, was being inaugurated, and the inhabitants were accumulating fabulous fortunes, by selling corner lots to each other, as values were trebling every twenty four hours.

Several of the newly-made millionaires, with an eye to doing something substantial after the wildcat speculation should have subsided, were earnestly and systematically desirous of securing a railway line to the Mississippi River, less than a hundred miles eastward. Such a thoroughfare was really needed in the interest of a fine agricultural country, and the chances were that real capitalists could safely invest in it.

Wayne's fine set of instruments, the like of which had never been seen in that locality before, established his reputation with the local magnates as a scientist of the first order, and before he had been in town twenty-four hours, to his amazement, almost to his consternation, he was offered the position of engineer in chief of the new railway that a company, with no small amount of financial ability, for a wonder, had been legally organized to build.

I suspect that Budlong may have had something to do in the bringing about of this astonishing event; it is certain that he had talked a good deal more than was his wont, at the inn where they took up their headquarters, about Steve's two years' experience on a Government survey, under Colonel Tangent, of the United States Engineer Corps, but however this may be, the chief promoters of an enterprise which, if successful, would enrich them if did nothing else, were thoroughly satisfied that a beneficent Providence had sent them just the bright, highly-accomplished, and attractive young fellow they wanted in the very nick of time.

It pleases me to be able to say that our young friend more than hesitated about accepting the position offered him, with its accompanying salary of five thousand dollars a year, for the simple reason that he considered himself entirely incompetent to fill the bill. A preliminary survey, he thought, he might be up to, because whoever located the line after him would, or ought to, correct such blunders as *he made through want of judgment*. And this he under-

took to do, telling his new friends that he would endeavor to procure a more experienced man to take charge of the work as it developed.

The man he thought of in this connection was his old professional tutor, Colonel Tangent, with whom he had kept up a haphazard correspondence, and consequently knew his whereabouts. He wrote Tangent, explaining the situation, and asking him, if he could not personally give his attention to the work he had in hand, to recommend some suitable man; and in the meanwhile went on with his preliminary survey, taking charge of the theodolite himself, with Budlong, to run the level.

Tangent answered in due time, and the letter reached Steve well out on his line. Our Colonel of the Engineer Corps had expanded into a great mining king, and could not bother with any such small affair as a prairie railroad enterprise, backed by doubtful capital and still more doubtful executive ability, nor had he any one to suggest for the position of Steve's superior.

"But take what the gods offer you," he wrote his former pupil. "Do the best you can, and the chances are ten to one that you come out with flying colors. Your proposed line is through an open prairie for the most part, I judge, which can offer no very serious engineering difficulties. Don't run curves of more than five degrees, unless in some extraordinary emergency. Keep gradients under one per cent., and make your cuts balance your fills, when this can be done. In any unforeseen contingency that may arise that you're unequal to, slip over to New York and consult a first-rate engineer; and if you have anything more complicated than pile or trestle bridges, employ a bridge architect. You are well up in the use of instruments, and will manage well enough, I imagine, if you don't lose your head and get the notion that you need someone to fall back upon. You have an opportunity to make a reputation. In all

sincerity, my dear boy, I believe you will do so. Go in and win."

Besides this sound professional advice, Tangent sent his whilom pupil some standard works on railroad-building, with drawings of such trestles, viaducts, and cattle-guards as he thought might be of use to him, and the result was that Steve followed the leading of fate, and, within three months after Stella had left him for her single room above the restaurant, was the scientific head of a great enterprise, earning a salary larger than Mr. Claymore of the *Cormorant* had ever received, and was regarded as one of the few men to whom all others looked up, in the embryo city where, for the time, he had cast anchor. The local newspapers had a good deal to say about him in those times, and some of them, I have reason to believe, found their way to the chintz-covered dry-goods box that served for a bureau in Stella's apartments, and I think she had it in her mind once or twice to endeavor to effect a reconciliation, but if so she never carried her plans into execution.

It was quite as well that she did not; for Steve was altogether disenchanted, and would have listened to no proposed terms of truce. He was still implacably resolved to be free of her, and, as soon as he had acquired the requisite citizenship, appeared in the chancery court as a suitor, praying for an absolute dissolution of his marital bonds. There was not much difficulty about obtaining a decree, Stella's own infamous letter of farewell being the most convincing evidence he had to offer, and, within a few days after the case was called, he was a single man, according to law, and Stella, so far as he was concerned, legally dead, while, as a matter of fact, living, with no surname to which she had a shadow of right.

Our young friend was not quite as thoroughly satisfied with being free as he had anticipated, or, to be exact about it, he *was not*, strange as it may seem, clear in his own mind that *he was free*, notwithstanding the decision of the court of

chancery, handsomely engrossed, and bearing the seal of that august tribunal, asserting that he was wifeless—as men say—for he recalled, as we do those things which we would like to forget, some scriptural admonitions that taught another doctrine. He professed to be an adherent of some modern school of free-thinkers, which is another way of saying that he was trying to believe in free infidelity, something no rational mortal ever did sincerely believe in who was reared at the knees of a praying mother; therefore, Steve found some obstacles in the way of becoming a consistent follower of a creed that, acknowledging no God, accepts no responsibility for the deeds done in the body.

Wayne should have been ambitious in these days, but ambition did not cut much of a figure with him. The zest of life had been lost, in one miserable calamity, and the frank and genial young fellow, for whom every one had a kindly regard, had been transformed into a moody man, far older than his years, who seldom laughed, who did his work well, because it was impossible for him, with his ideas, to do it otherwise, but who had little genuine interest in what he was doing. The glamor that had surrounded his first experience in journalism was altogether wanting, nor could he feel the same excitement with which he first went over the futtock shrouds and learned to pass a weather earring on the topsail yard, with a gale blowing, following the knowledge of danger surmounted.

Worse than this, he had lost a certain sense of propriety in which he had been studiously educated; he had taken to looking for that solace, which so many of the disappointed seek, in the nepenthe of alcoholic stimulants, and find, to their dismay, a little later, that a dreadful Old Man of the Sea is astride their necks, riding them to destruction.

It is a most unpalatable task to speak of this episode in the career of our well-born, well-disposed, and fairly-cultured friend, who might have done so well, and who did

so ill, if I must sum up his achievements, with the truthfulness that belongs to history, while so much of his wrongdoing came through the infamy of a soulless woman. I hope, as a churchman, that there is pardon in the world which sets this right for the Stella Snows; as a member of society, I hope never to encounter them.

Budlong knew nothing about the divorce proceedings, so he had no opportunity for expressing his views, whatever they might have been, upon this phase of Western enterprise, but he did observe Steve's growing predilection for the inebriating glass, and, in his own rude way, read him a temperance lecture.

"You've got on to the quarter-deck of this dry land navigation business," he said, one night, "and there's plain sailin' ahead of you, younker, if you don't go and booze out your fit like an afore-the-mast old shellback on liberty. An honest swaller of rum about seven bells in the mornin', and agin just arter the last dog watch, is one thing, and this drinkin' between drinks, with a demijohn handy, the watch round, is another, and so I tell ye, my lad."

"You certainly don't think that I am drinking excessively, Mr. Budlong?" Steve answered.

"That's just what I think you are doin', younker, with a railroad on your hands, and a reputation to make, but I don't suppose it's any good for an old seafarin' man, whose been by the head himself more times than he'd orter, to preach this 'ere kind o' sermons, but you're going to the devil, so you are, unless you go in stays right off."

Mr. Budlong's criticism was justly made, and Steve certainly would have gone to the devil, as his large-minded old friend suggested; but when hope was giving up the ghost, so far as he was concerned, he met a lady, destined, as it came to pass, to influence his whole after-life, and was saved.

CHAPTER XXXII..

Wayne had maintained a comfortable, but unpretentious establishment from the beginning of his engineering engagement, preferring to keep house to boarding, for various reasons, chiefly because it enabled him the better to avoid society, for which he had conceived a strong distaste. He found a small cottage, on a retired street, that served for residence and office, and in this, with Prometheus as steward and man of all work, and Mr Budlong as company, he lived measurably contented.

Invitations to such social gatherings as the city afforded, came thick and fast for a time, until his continuous refusals to accept them engendered suspicion that he entertained some reprehensible aristocratic notions, which are at a discount at the wild West, and eventually he was let alone, as he desired to be, to make the most of his mishap, by dwelling upon it. He might have made himself highly popular in his new home; his position made him conspicuous, his gentlemanly taste in dress, which a metropolitan tailor had fashioned, rendered him noticeable in a young city where carelessness, not to say uncouthness, of costume was the rule, but he chose to make himself unpopular, to hold himself haughtily aloof from the majority of those with whom he was brought in contact, and had reason to know that he had been unwise in so doing, later on.

But he followed his own bent in those days, and would have paid little heed to any counsel that might have been tendered him touching his social relations; in fine, he blundered in an important particular, as many another of us has done when at his callow age. He was usually somewhere

on his line during the day, if the weather permitted field work; at night he worked over his topographical notes, while Budlong methodically sketched his profile, and Prometheus, after the six o'clock dinner was cleared away, snored peacefully in the kitchen.

But one grows morbid under such circumstances, unless possessed of uncommon strength of mind, backed by extraordinarily well-defined principles, and then comes the temptation to tamper with those delusions, to which morbidity so often turns, to its after sorrow.

One memorable afternoon Steve sauntered in from the field, and stopped at the stationer's for a few sheets of drawing paper; the proprietor, Mr. Graem, one of the few tradesmen in town with whom he pretended to affiliate, was out, and the place was apparently in charge of a *petite* lady, who was idly turning over the periodicals on the news stand part of the establishment. The careless glance which he cast in her direction, as he deposited his theodolite at the door, showed him that she was not, strictly speaking, pretty, but that she had, nevertheless, a wonderfully bright, responsive face, and a pair of dark eyes that sparkled like stars. He noticed also, in a masculine way, that observes a general effect without details, that the plain dress she wore was decidedly stylish, differing widely in this respect from those of the local belles he had occasionally noticed.

"Mr. Graem is away for the moment," she said, "and I'm afraid you must wait till he returns, if you wish to purchase anything, for I am serving my first half hour as a shopwoman."

"I judged you were new to this calling," Steve said, intending to say something complimentary, and perhaps succeeding, to the lady's comprehension; anyhow she smiled pleasantly.

"Yes; this is the first time I have ever been in charge of a *shop*, and you are the first customer to remind me that I am

deplorably incompetent for such a position. You are Mr. Wayne, I think, the gentleman who is building the new railroad?"

"Yes; I have to advertise my calling by the instruments I must need carry about with me; but, pardon me, you are a stranger here, I think, at all events, I have never met you before, and you don't seem to belong to this locality."

"You are quite right; I am a new arrival, the very newest one, I think. Mrs. Graem is a distant relative. I am visiting her, and in pursuit of my fortune, as young women have to be who do not have houses and lands left them by a considerate ancestry. I am a teacher of French and music and some other branches of education—reading, spelling, and grammar, for instance—and am called Miss Harthope.

"Are you favorably impressed with our city?"

"Yes and no. There is much about the dash and energy of these Western places that almost everyone admires in a way, still the staidness, the social advantages, and the culture of the East are more to my liking; but the East is overflowing with forlorn maidens who have to care for themselves, and we gravitate hitherward, as you young men do."

"Yes, it has been the habit since the world began, I believe, for the adventurous and discontented to journey westward in the hope of bettering their condition."

"And do you belong to the adventurous or to the discontented class?" the lady said, with her peculiarly bright smile.

"To both, I'm afraid, Miss Harthope. I'm certainly a good deal of an adventurer for my age, having made a voyage to sea before the mast, followed General Scott's army through the Mexican War, and wandered over a good deal of our newly-acquired possessions on the Pacific Coast, with a party of Government surveyors. I have also had some experiences which pretty well disenchanted me with life."

"You're too young for such disenchantment, Mr. Wayne,

the troubles which come in the morning of life pass away before the noontide, as a rule."

"As a rule, yes; but to all rules there are exceptions. I should beg your pardon, however, for leading our conversation into such dolorous channels, and for indulging in so many prosy details about myself. May I inquire if you are likely to remain here?"

"I imagine so—at least Mr. Graem appears to think that I shall secure a position in the academy sufficiently remunerative to meet the requirements of one small body. And here comes the gentleman himself, to relieve me from my vigil and you from a tiresome waiting."

"It has been quite the reverse of tiresome, and I certainly hope I shall have the pleasure of meeting you again."

"That's sensible, at all events," Mr. Graem said, having entered in time to hear Steve's last remark; "have you two got acquainted, or must I go through with a formal introduction? Let's let the introduction go, anyhow; and I tell you, Wayne, come round and take tea with us—you've been promising to do that for the last year or so—and let's have a cozy evening. Miss Harthope is a stranger, and some of you young fellows must see that she has a little polite attention, so that she won't get the impression that we're all barbarians this side the Mississippi."

"I thank you, Mr. Graem, I'll accept your invitation; but I must first go to report to my own household, so that a search won't be instituted for me."

Our young friend had another object in view, aside from relieving Mr. Budlong and Prometheus of any anxiety they might feel over his non-appearance at supper. His wardrobe contained a more correct costume for the occasion than the high boots, slouch hat, and tweed suit in which he was garbed, and at the proper hour he arrived at Mr. Graem's, attired accurately, and passed a very delightful evening.

He spent a good many more within the next few weeks in the same company, although, after the visit had been a few times repeated at very brief intervals, Mrs. Graem, who was a good-natured as well as a wise little woman, had many household affairs that required her attention, and she managed to let her spouse understand that, if he had business elsewhere in the evening, it might be as well for all concerned, so Steve generally had Helen Harthope to himself, for which he was duly grateful. The first favorable impression he had formed of her grew and strengthened rapidly, as he knew her better, and before a week he had come to the conclusion that he had at last met a woman to be safely trusted with his happiness. He did not feel for her the wild, ungovernable passion he had once felt for Stella Snow, but it was deeper, more abiding love, because predicated upon unqualified respect for her character, and no faint shadow of suspicion crossed his mind that she would ever prove unfaithful to the man whose name she consented to bear, under any stress of circumstances. Daily, almost hourly, he found himself contrasting her with Stella, and always to the sad disadvantage of the latter. Helen was no more thoroughly cultured than his former enslaver, but her reading had been more general, embracing a large variety of subjects that women seldom bother with, and besides, she was a girl of strong religious convictions, which were apparent in every action of her daily life. Steve's religious convictions were neither numerous nor intense, as has been remarked in the course of this history, and such small faith as he had once possessed had been sadly shaken by his intercourse with Christians of the Dr. Adamant school; but, like many another irreligious man, he in his heart revered a genuinely Christian woman, whose belief was not put on and off with her Sunday gown, who practiced, as well as professed, those cardinal Christian virtues which are a woman's chiefest charm.

He felt horribly doubtful about securing the love of this woman, for the reason that he was, in his own estimation, decidedly unworthy of her, and, for aught he knew, she might entertain a similar opinion, especially after learning, if she did not already know, of the unfortunate *finale* of his previous domestic experience. But he never dreamed of concealing anything in his past from her; he would win her fairly, or not at all. With this thought in his mind, he asked her to walk with him one evening, determined to have it out and know the worst or the best.

"I suppose you can hardly imagine, Miss Harthope, what I wish to say to you to-night?" he said, after an ominously long silence.

"Probably my imaginative powers are not brilliant."

"Then, at the risk of seeming unpardonably presumptuous, I must tell you without any circumlocution, which would not help the matter, that in the short time we have been acquainted, I have learned to love you very dearly, and want to make you my wife."

"Is that all you have to tell me?"

"Unfortunately for me, it is not."

"What is the rest? Speak truly, let there be no concealments."

Thus commanded, Steve proceeded to the performance of the hardest task he had ever undertaken; but he was resolute and honorable, and, when he ceased speaking, Helen Harthope knew all that the reader knows of his past life.

She heard him to the end, without interruption or comment; then, after a brief silence, she said:

"You have told me the truth, Mr. Wayne, of this I am assured, and I am grieved as well as gratified. I shall not pretend to say that the love you profess for me is not reciprocated, for it is, fully, completely. I almost think I have loved you from our first meeting, but am not quite sure—

but that does not matter; the question is, What answer shall I give you?"

"How can there be a question about that, if you regard me as you say you do?"

"There is, nevertheless, the gravest one I have ever had to consider. I am a churchwoman—that is, an Episcopalian—Mr. Wayne, and the church does not recognize such a severance of the marriage tie as entitles the divorced husband or wife to contract a second marriage while the former husband or wife still lives. You have been sadly tried, sorely tempted; I am not prepared to say that a Christian might not act as you have done, but I must have time to be sure of what I ought to do. Come to me in one week, and you shall have my answer; but in the *interim* you must not see me—must not write me. I must be allowed to make up as near an unbiased judgment as I can. Now take me home."

At the time appointed, Wayne went, with fear and trembling, to learn the issue of his suit. Helen received him kindly, but with unusual gravity, and for a little time both were silent; then Steve said, in a voice that was tremulous, in spite of all his endeavors to keep it steady: "I've come for my sentence, Helen; what is it?"

She did not reply for a moment, but then said: "My heart and my conscience have fought it out, and conscience has lost the battle."

"Which means—?"

"That I will marry you; but, oh, my dear! I fear that I am committing a dreadful sin, for which I shall be held accountable."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Steve walked slowly home after parting with Helen that evening, his mind in a whirl. His wooing had been successful. The woman his innermost soul craved as a companion for life, and most likely the only one in the world with whom he would have again ventured out upon the sea of matrimony, had promised to be his wife; and so far he was elated. But her solemn declaration that she could not fulfill this promise with a clear conscience, made him uncomfortable in spite of all the philosophy he could muster to his aid. From many, perhaps from the majority, of women such a declaration would have amounted to very little, because thoughtlessly or insincerely uttered; but Helen Harthope meant exactly what she said, and her lover knew it. He had become sadly negligent of the admonitions of the silent mentor so alert to sound a note of warning when we step outside the inconveniently narrow path, but he did not quite relish the idea of leading the woman whose love he had gained into doing what to her seemed wrong. He could not give her up, however, and, as there was no intermediate course to pursue, he must necessarily go forward, accepting such consequences as ensued, and if there was something like a brooding dread upon him, it was of disaster to her, not to himself.

In this rather depressed mental condition, for a man newly engaged to the lady of his choice, he reached his quarters where he found Budlong poring over a letter, with some strong indications of trouble upon his usually expressionless face.

"Have you bad news, sir?" Steve asked, feeling absolutely certain that such was the case.

"The wust of news," the old man mournfully answered; "a cussed land pirate who had the handling of the money in the bank down East, where every shot I had in the locker was stored away, has gone on a v'yage of discovery to the Queen's dominions, 'tother side of the St. Lawrence River, and took about all there was along with him, as I conjectur, excepting the buildin' and the lot it stood on."

"That is, indeed, unfortunate," Steve said; "but things may not turn out quite so bad as they appear at first view."

"There ain't much hope of these things appearin' better, younker; these land pirates, like sea pirates, don't leave much chance for salvage, and I had a pretty bit of money there, hard earned; that I was minded to turn to account when I turned in for my last watch below. All this comes of keepin' fellows in a bank that haven't stayin qualities."

"It is certainly desirable to have a bank cashier that will stay, or leave the funds behind him when he goes," Steve said; "but tell me the particulars, so far as you know them, and then we can determine what, if anything, can be done."

It did not seem, upon an investigation of such facts as were before the friends, that very much could be done, with any assurance that the result would compensate for the inevitable trouble and expense. The trusted employé of a great moneyed institution, largely patronized by seafaring men, had absconded with most of the cash, as that class of gentlemen continue to do in these our days, which had necessitated a temporary, perhaps a final, suspension of the concern.

The news had been conveyed to Budlong by a ship-chandler, an old-time friend and a fellow-sufferer in this instance, who wound up his communication by urging him to return to New York at once, and join with a number of other heavy losers in a systematic attempt to recover something from the wreck by the devious processes the law affords.

Wayne thought there might be something in the suggestion worth consideration, and advised Budlong to go, promising that his position in the engineer corps should be held open for him until his return.

So our old friend made up his mind to turn his face eastward on the morrow, and Steve, for reasons which he could have hardly explained, determined to let him go without advising him of his contemplated marriage. Perhaps he thought it an inauspicious moment in which to parade his new happiness; perhaps he was just a little doubtful as to the kind of congratulation he would receive. This he did do, however, before he slept that night; he wrote Shannahan, of the *Cormorant*, with whom he had not communicated before since his westward flight, detailing briefly the circumstances of the case and asking that a first-rate lawyer should be secured to look after Budlong's interests whom he—Wayne—would recompense. In the same epistle which was extended into many pages, he told this old "brother in arms" what he was doing—what brilliant prospects seemed to be opening before him in a new field; how he had freed himself from Stella Snow, and finally there was a description of Helen Harthope, who had come to him, he said, "like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land"—like a draught of pure water to one perishing from thirst—like a balm and comfort to one whose life had turned into inexpressible bitterness.

There were no injunctions of secrecy in the letter; therefore Mr. Shannahan felt justified in penning the following "personal," which appeared in the next morning's issue of the *Cormorant*.

"We learn with pleasure that Mr. Stephen Wayne, the brilliant young journalist, that served so long and so acceptably on the *Cormorant* staff, at home and abroad, is at present the engineer-in-chief of a Western railway, now in process of construction. Mr. Wayne left New York and the employ

of the *Cormorant* in consequence of a domestic disaster concerning which it is enough to say that he had the sympathy of all who knew him whose sympathy was worth having. From this disaster he has recovered, and is about to wed with Miss Helen Harthope, a highly-accomplished young lady, formerly of —, Connecticut. We wish our old associate every felicity in his new relation."

Several results, all mischievous, came of this publication. In the first place, Tadmore became thereby advised that her prodigal son, who had in one way been a blessing, because he had furnished the ladies of the sewing society with an exhaustless theme of gossip, but who had also been a thorn in the flesh, because through him had arisen a feud in Dr. Adamant's church which bade fair to continue until the sea gave up its dead, was about to place the cap-stone upon a towering monument of misdoing by committing bigamy.

In no milder terms did these good people characterize Steve's contemplated marriage, after a legal divorce, and, his address having been obtained, his mail for the next few weeks was flooded with denunciatory letters. There are those, and they are many, who believe in the thunder and the earthquake of terror, when dealing with unrepentant sinners; a few who have faith in the efficacy of the still, small voice addressed to the conscience and the reason. A far larger and infinitely higher class of wanderers from the one safe course that can be steered over the tempest-tossed ocean of life can be reclaimed through the teaching of God's unspeakable goodness than of his insatiable vengeance. Any arrant coward, a mere parody upon a human being, may be frightened into an apparent renunciation of evil-doing, through apprehension of endless torment, while this pusillanimous sentiment would hardly influence those great, generous souls which might be won by the love and self-sacrifice exemplified in Gethsemane's Garden and upon

the Hill of Calvary, where the great Mediator suffered and died to atone for the sins of fallen man.

I have no high esteem for the sinner who seeks salvation through dread that God will damn him; but I do respect any bewildered wayfarer who makes even a spasmodic effort to amend his life, because the Saviour of Men died that he might live.

The reader will please pardon this sermon from one who was never called to preach, and has no disposition to usurp the sacred office.

Steve's letters of denunciation came from all sorts and conditions of people, who had known him from boyhood, and prophesied his early arrival at perdition any time since his wild exploits, while a student at Mr. Walworth's academy. Dr. Adamant wrote him, in what terms I need hardly describe; so did Sister Snoop, Sister Tishbite, Sister Balaam, and several others, all of which effusions he glanced at, swore an outlandish oath he had picked up in Mexico, and tossed contemptuously into his waste-basket. In none of these, be it remembered, was a word of censure for the marble-hearted woman who had deserted him, simply because she thought that by so doing she would stand a better chance of inheriting the great estate of Zicazal Snow; so, perhaps, in a way, he was excusable for using, in the solitude of his office, some strong expletives expressive of what he could not help feeling—being intelligent.

Over one communication from Tadmore, however, he bowed his head upon his drawing table and wept as he had not done for many years. It read:

"I am so rejoiced, my son, that you have found someone to love you in your trouble, and pray God you may not have made another dreadful mistake. I should so much like to see your Helen, and kiss her, if she loves you truly; but this may not be: your father would not admit her to his *house*. He may be right, though it seems to me, my poor

boy, that you have been hardly dealt with. Of course you are wrong—at least everyone says so—to marry again, while Stella lives; but if you are very sure that Helen will be faithful in any trouble that may come to you, give her the enclosed curl of gray hair, that I clipped from my temple, with my love. MOTHER."

Upon an impulse of the moment, Steve carried the letter, the curl of gray hair, and the miniature on ivory that he had taken to sea with him, to Helen Harthope and placed them in her hands without a word. She read the letter, with brimming eyes, and placed it in her bosom with the enclosed curl of gray hair.

"I am a woman, and can translate a woman's letter," she said, quietly; "they all forsook Him and fled, but His mother tarried at the foot of the cross. Say to your mother that I have her letter and the lock of her hair in my bosom, and that I ask God to exclude me from any part in His eternal life if I am unfaithful to the vows I assume when I wed you. She will know, if you tell her this exactly as I have said it, what I mean and what I will do."

"Won't you write that to mother yourself?" Steve said, in obedience to an inspiration; "I will enclose it."

"If you wish, certainly." And Helen did as he requested.

Our young friend had one other letter that considerably upset his equanimity, and that was from the ancient mariner, Mr. Budlong, who, fine navigator and accomplished mathematician as he was, had never mastered the sciences of spelling and grammar.

After mentioning some business matters, the old sailor went on to say:

"I read in the *Cormorant* this mornin', and see Mr. Shanahan afterward, who told me he knew from you what the paper said was correct, that you're goin' to get spliced ag'in. I ain't nothin' to say about this that you'd like to hear; it was good seamanship to cut adrift from that other wife,

who didn't have stayin' qualities, but I have my doubts, younker, about your clear right to ship on another craft till the one called Stella has foundered for good and all. Howsomever, with a new wife you won't want me for awhile, and while the bank business is settlin', I'll take another v'yage, hopin' that all sorts of blessin's will be showered down on ye for all time to come. So no more from your friend,

"JERUBDIAH BUDLONG."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

There were no reasons, financial or otherwise, for delaying the marriage, if it was to take place at all. So one morning, before the engagement was quite a month old, Stephen Wayne and Helen Harthope went before the judge of a court of record at his chambers, and were made one according to law.

It was hardly more than a parody upon marriage, in the estimation of the bride, with whom the solemnization of holy matrimony was associated with a chancel rail, a pealing organ, a surpliced priest, and clasped hands covered by a stole (the emblem of the sacred office), and the bestowal of the plain gold ring, never to be removed from the bride's finger during the rest of her life. But she was aware that no priest of the church would officiate, if advised of the circumstances of the case, and from her standpoint a dissenting minister had no authority, ecclesiastical or civil. So the services of the judge were secured, and Steve, having given him a previous hint, he made his extempore service to embrace the giving and receiving of a ring.

To the end of her days, Helen never knew that this was not an essential of every civil marriage, of which she was inclined to be a little tolerant, for that reason. Indeed, this *exceedingly* high-church young lady was disposed to think,

after her experience, that a judge enshrouded in judicial dignity was the best substitute for a priest wearing canonicals upon those occasions when two hearts desire the sanction of society to beat as one.

When the brief ceremony was over, the newly-made husband and wife walked over to Steve's cottage, on the back street, and commenced housekeeping, assisted by Norah Flaherty, a middle-aged woman from Cork.

Wayne's income fully justified a generous style of living, and he had been minded, with his usual careless disregard of money, to fit up a decidedly pretentious mansion for the reception of his bride. He explained his views in this direction to her one evening, but she had poured cold water on the project.

"The cottage, where you are living, will do very well for the present," she said, "though it will doubtless require some refurnishing, after being so long desecrated as a bachelor's den. I'll procure what is necessary, and, luckily, I have almost a whole year's salary in my reticule."

"Good gracious, Helen," Steve cried, in dismay, "you're not thinking of using your money to furnish my house, I hope!"

"Certainly not to furnish your house, sir; it's mine we were talking about, or it will be mine when you condescend to make me Mrs. Wayne."

"Of course, it's yours, and everything else I have, or ever shall have; but I have money enough, and——"

"Mr. Wayne, please don't set up as a lord of creation, which is a character I particularly abominate, and you ought to know that if a man does *occasionally* manage to have his will, a woman *always* has her way, which, of course, is exactly as it ought to be. Did I ever tell you that I was strong-minded?"

"Oh, confound it! do as you like," Steve answered, half amazed, half disposed to mount the high horse.

"Thanks for accepting the inevitable with very good grace, considering how hard it is for a man to abdicate the throne he sometimes contrives to usurp for a little while. Now, let's be practical and consider; you are earning a good deal of money just now, I suppose, but your railway company may get into difficulties, or fail utterly, after awhile, and another position may not open immediately; so we will live away within our means and be ready to tide over any disaster of that kind that may occur."

"You're a wonderful woman, Helen."

"Oh dear! I knew that long ago, or, rather, I supposed you would most likely think so, until we had been married for three months, say; but I haven't shown you half how wonderful I am yet, and, while we're arranging and explaining, pray tell me who that extraordinary creature you call Prometheus is, and why you keep him about you?"

Wayne laughed, but a little uneasily. "The fellow is not very prepossessing," he said, "and a good deal of a rascal, but he is a fellow-townsmen, who, when I ran away to sea in my boyhood, went with me, at my suggestion. He's never seemed to think since he could live away from me, and has been at my heels like a dog in all my wanderings, but he has been a faithful servant, and I couldn't think of turning him adrift."

"Of course not, under such circumstances; but make use of him out of doors hereafter, for there's the best old Irish woman in the world, who was my nurse, and lived with us for years before my father was lost, with the whaling ship he commanded, in a typhoon, near the coast of Japan; the dear old thing has followed me here, and would follow me to China if I went there. I want to install her as house-keeper, for I'm going to assist you in the office."

"What in the deuce could you do in an engineer's office?" our young gentleman asked, in amazement.

"Don't be impertinent, Mr. Wayne; you're addressing a

Connecticut school ma'am, and Connecticut school ma'ams are supposed to know whatever could be learned from books. As a matter of fact, I do chance to be thoroughly versed in geometry, trigonometry, and algebra, and you may safely trust me with any kind of mathematical calculations."

Steve had known a good many so-called accomplished women in his time—Stella Snow among others—but this was the first one who had fallen under his observation who appeared to be capable of putting her accomplishments to a practical use outside the walls of the schoolroom. Our aristocratic young friend rather revolted at the idea of having his wife working with him at every day office business, but, upon sober second thought, it occurred to him what an abiding comfort it would be, after all, to have Helen's bright, winsome face always before him, when he looked up from his desk or drawing-table; so Helen's plan was agreed to.

There was one temporary sufferer from this arrangement, nevertheless; namely, our old acquaintance Prometheus. This unhappy victim of circumstances, who had received no intimation of the prospective change in his patron's life, was serenely washing dishes, a couple of mornings before that set for the wedding, when his domain was invaded, without warning, by an awful woman, with an eye that made him quake and a vocabulary that paralyzed him. She came in like a whirlwind, carrying an armful of scrubbing brushes, and, without taking the trouble to introduce herself, addressed him: "You miserable, dirty spalpeen, be afther takin the firnicher in the back yard immediately," and Prometheus, too frightened to think of remonstrating, made haste to do her bidding.

Then the amazon proceeded to tear up carpets, oilcloths, and matting, and throw them out doors; then to deluge the floor with water, to scrub windows, back stairs, front

stairs, and in fact everything else that was susceptible of scrubbing, keeping the demoralized young fellow sharply up to the mark by a running fire of expletives that absolutely terrified him. If he paused for a moment, her characteristic admonition, "Is it atin the bread of idleness ye'd be afther doin'?" excited him even to almost superhuman exertion. Once the wild idea occurred to him of making a dash, scaling a back fence, and placing himself under the protection of the police, but the awful eye was upon him, seeming to scan his very soul, and he dared not make the desperate attempt.

About ten o'clock P. M., when he was completely worn out, when every bone in his body ached, and the last faint glimmer of hope was dying out in his bosom, this terror in petticoats took her departure, with the encouraging remark, "Don't be afther slapin' in the mornin'; have the kittle bilen and the fire burnin' bright, I'll be wid ye early in the mornin', mind ye now," whereupon Prometheus sat down upon the floor and burst into tears.

In this sad plight Steve found him, half an hour later. "What the devil is the matter with you?" was the not unnatural question, at which the unfortunate's tears flowed afresh.

"This 'ere house has been took possession ov, Mr. Wayne," was the lugubrious answer, "by a terrible female who—"

"Oh, the new housekeeper, I suppose," Steve said, interrupting him, "I am to be married the day after to-morrow, and she came down to clean up, I suppose."

"And is she goin' to stay continuous like?"

"To be sure; we can't go on as we have been doing, with a lady in the house, you know."

"Well then, Mr. Wayne, I want to crawl off somewheres and die," was the heartbroken rejoinder, "it seems as though things was all busted up."

CHAPTER XXXV.

Helen's programme was carried out exactly as she had arranged, it being the habit of that mentally well-balanced young lady to consider well her plans, and then proceed to the systematic execution of them. Norah Flaherty assumed command of the housekeeping department, inaugurating a reign of terror in the kitchen, from whence, nevertheless, most marvelously appetizing breakfasts and dinners issued, while the young wife took possession of Budlong's vacant desk, and was soon as entirely at home with the ordinary routine of business as she would have been in the management of classes in a schoolroom.

A bright woman acquires a working knowledge of any new pursuit in which she is really interested, with a celerity that amounts almost to intuition. Helen had been endowed by nature with a splendid mental equipment, and had had the advantages of a thorough training, especially in mathematics, so she was unusually well qualified for her self-assigned work.

Always diligent, always cheerful, and always ready with a happy hint or suggestion in any perplexity that arose, she was soon regarded by Steve as his right hand, his wise counsellor, his professional comrade, and a most genial companion, whose society he never for a moment wished to exchange for that of any other person under Heaven. They were almost constantly together, too, in these early days of their married life. The office demanded the greater part of Steve's attention, and assistants were engaged to take charge of the field work, so all day the wedded ones busied

themselves over calculations, maps, and profiles, and in the evening, like the lovers they were, strolled away to bill and coo in the seclusion of some pretty nook. On these occasions Norah Flaherty was wont to stand in the hall, with her arms akimbo, a tender look lighting up her harsh, ungainly features, murmuring to herself when they were safely out of ear-shot, "Arrah, missus! but it's the moighty fine lover ye've got, the saints be praised."

Wayne became a wiser and better as well as a happier man, under such influences. Hardly aware that he was changing his course in this particular, he ceased to make habitual or even frequent use of stimulants, and gradually so far overcame his haughty reserve that he began to mingle with his townsmen, greatly to his popularity. Helen had never openly striven to influence him to these courses, but she had that wonderful faculty, unfortunately possessed by so few women, of setting up a standard, and psychologically, as it were, compelling those with whom she was intimately associated, to rally round it.

But in one particular Helen's influence utterly failed—Steve would not attend church with her. He was pleasant and polite enough about it, but obdurate as granite; inside of a house of worship he would not step. This was no small sorrow to Helen, but she kept it to herself and hoped for better things in the future, to which all of us so frequently look for the great blessing that is so laggard in coming.

It rather looked as though genuine prosperity and happiness had entered into the unpretending Wayne mansion, with a notion of permanently abiding there, and so thought most members of the household; but there was one who was inclined to mope and look upon life as a failure.

Prometheus' nerves had never recovered from the shaking up they had experienced on that dreadful day when he acted as *aid-de-camp*, under compulsion, to Norah in the house-cleaning. He had stealthily removed his bed to the barn,

during the succeeding night, where he took up his quarters thenceforward, and as he would have, most likely, starved before mustering up courage to go into the kitchen, while he believed the terrible Irish woman to be lying in wait for him, to secure anything to eat, Steve, after laughing inhumanly at his misery, bade him get his meals at a neighboring boarding-house until he and Norah could make it up and settle down in connubial bliss. But his troubles did not end here. He loved pots and kettles, but, there being no further use for his services among these utensils, he was detailed as an ax-man in the engineer force, a position that necessitated some hard work, and this was something his soul abhorred. "I wasn't meant by natur' for this sort of thing," he used to moan, while fashioning and driving stakes, "and a artist who can make om'lets and fricassee chicken hadn't orter be bemeaned this 'ere way."

There is many another who has to descend from a high to a lowly position, through the machinations of Fate, who can sympathize with the repinings of my friend Prometheus.

For a little more than a year matters progressed with our friends much as I have described; the railroad was well along in its construction period, and Steve was beginning to think that the world was thereafter to move well with him, when one of those great financial earthquakes, that originate no one ever seems to understand very clearly how, shook the country from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and all the money that had been previously in circulation vanished as if by magic. Of course, a panic ensued; work was suspended on the railroad, as it was in the factory, the mine, the pinery, and pretty much everywhere else; those who had a little hoard saved up against such contingency thanked God and their own economic forethought; such as were without the means of bridging the chasm suddenly opened before them wondered, with such a wonder as only the poverty-stricken can, what was to become of them when the butcher would

not extend credit for another joint, the baker for another loaf, the landlord for another week's shelter.

Thanks to Helen, Wayne belonged to the first category; he had a thousand dollars in the local bank, his instruments, good health, an enviable reputation, and did not owe a dollar. But his helpmate would not let him rest in fancied security.

"There may be a little professional work," she said, "in surveying, but not much, I think; for while there are many who wish to sell farms, etc., to meet pressing necessities, there are few who are prepared to buy, or who will feel disposed to, until they know where this panic is to end. Steve, you must go to writing again."

"For the weekly *Thunderbolt*, at fifty cents a column, payable in garden truck, if the gardens don't suspend, like everything else," was the laughing rejoinder.

"I did not mean that; while you were connected with the *Cormorant*, you used to write sketches, stories, etc., so you told me, for the literary magazines and weeklies; do the same thing now, and see what comes of it; it will be infinitely better than doing nothing, at all events."

"You're right, as usual," Steve said, and thereupon lighted a cigar, leaned back in his office chair, and began to frame the plot for a serial.

It certainly seemed that he had not considered the propriety of taking up some avocation whereby money could be earned any too soon; for the next morning it was noised on the street that the bank where his thousand dollars were deposited had gone the way of all such financially weak institutions in those times, and was hopelessly bankrupt.

While these disastrous events were happening, our old friend Budlong was attending to the lading of a great tea ship, in the port of Canton, and a month afterward sailed for New York.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The young couple had not been left quite moneyless through the bank failure; Steve had been in the habit of handing over the greater part of his salary, as he drew it, to Helen, who, after defraying the family expenses and purchasing anything that chanced to be needed, deposited the rest, and of his last month's pay it happened that she had about one hundred dollars in the drawer of her writing-desk. This was a godsend, indeed; for it put off, for a season at least, the commencement of that horror of horrors, "going on tick," and the sagacious Helen hoarded it like a miser, having reasons of her own for so doing, and not a shilling of it was expended while it could be in any way avoided.

Wayne had never cared enough about money, or been in financial straits enough, to think very long or very seriously over his loss; they had sufficient to carry on with for the present, and he thought it likely he should find a way to earn more before it was entirely gone; so there was no use in worrying.

Beside, Helen's suggestion that he should resume his former literary pursuits struck him most favorably, upon consideration, and already the plot of a novel was developing in his mind, which he fancied might be sufficiently original and interesting to be worth working out; but it required a good deal of thought to perfect, and necessitated some turning over of books of reference, which fully occupied his time for a brief season.

Moreover, he deemed it expedient to get himself into training again by preparing some brief sketches of travel and adventure, which former experience told him would be

marketable; and these he sent to Shannahan, together with a brief but by no means lachrymose account of his ill luck, and asked him to do the best he could with them.

By degrees he got to work on the novel, trying his paces rather gingerly at first, and a good many of the first chapters had to be re-written, some of them more than once, ere they passed muster at the bar of his judgment; but at last imagination awoke in earnest; he clearly saw the end, and how most effectively to handle his characters; his old facility of expression returned, and with it came a genuine enthusiasm for his book. He did not make very rapid progress, nor did he endeavor to; he was honestly striving to do his best, and while he labored Helen sat over against him, busy with dainty needle-work, chiefly embroidery, it seemed, which was thrust out of sight whenever a chance caller came in. Sometimes she sharply criticised some passage he read to her, but as a rule she approved, specially, after she began to see clearly the drift of his romance, into which were dexterously woven some curious theories they had often discussed together, concerning that little-known region lying beyond the bounds of plain every-day philosophy.

Notwithstanding a few shadows on the wall, therefore, our friends found the time passing most agreeably, and were by no means disposed to think that fortune was unduly sinister.

Prometheus, meanwhile, was expending the superfluous energy of his nature upon the considerable garden belonging to the cottage, and enlivening the dull monotony of toil by occasional moonlight excursions to rural hen-roosts and melon patches. Once it occurred to him to attempt the conciliation of Norah by a gift of a pair of the feathered victims of the nightly raid; but she glared at him suspiciously, and demanded to know how he came by them, whereupon he fled in dismay, and, with some kind of a shadowy notion of *quieting his conscience* by a proper atonement, he carried

the stolen poultry to the Methodist minister, who lived on the next street, with the explanation that they had been sent "by a feller as had gone wrong once, when he was a little boy, but wan't never goin' to do so no more, and would like to jine the church as soon as there was a vacancy."

The good man regarded the uncouth youth with astonishment, but, presuming he had blundered over the message with which he had been entrusted, and that he should learn the right of it in due time, accepted the donation with a smile, and was conscious of a wish, as he bore them to his wife, that many more repentant sinners would emphasize the turning over of a new leaf in like manner.

It is possible that Prometheus seriously intended to mend his ways, and may be really did, but the fact remained that melons and chickens continued to disappear at regular intervals in that vicinity.

Steve's writing and Helen's embroidery were progressing in a satisfactory manner, when both were interrupted by an unwonted commotion which occurred at their residence one night. A sanhedrim of elderly ladies had suddenly assembled in obedience to some inscrutable influence in Helen's apartment, and glared upon Steve with an expression that appeared to be compounded of supreme contempt and concentrated vindictiveness, in about equal parts, finally expelling him ignominiously from among them, while they welcomed with gracious smiles a gray-haired old doctor, manifestly upon the best of terms with himself and the entire human family, who came in with a breezy joke, a familiar, comprehensive nod, and a cheery "Well, well, glad to see you, ladies; all going on nicely, of course," which were the last words that fell upon our young friend's ears as he crept miserably down-stairs, feeling about three feet high, and capable of turning the scales at twenty-five pounds avoirdupois, or thereabouts. For an hour, that seemed an age, he paced the office a prey to such a brood-

ing dread as had never oppressed him before, then he ventured to invade the kitchen, hoping to get a word of comfort from Norah, but that faithful servitor had evidently gone over to the enemy up-stairs, for she frowned darkly as he entered, and, with a grunt for a salutation, turned to busy herself among some mysterious garments airing before a roaring fire.

He was rapidly losing the command of his senses, under this accumulation of snubs and anxiety, and might have betaken himself to the barn for such companionship as Prometheus could afford, but just then the doctor came down, rubbing his hands and smiling benignly.

"A fine little girl, Mr. Wayne," he said; "a remarkably fine little girl; let me congratulate you, sir; you have reason——"

But Steve waited to hear no more, he was flying up-stairs, three steps at a bound, and, in defiance of the grim guard, he made his way to Helen's bedside, and was greeted with one bright, happy smile before he was again expelled, very nearly *vi et armis*. There was just one tinge of disappointment in the great rush of happiness that came with the sense of paternity, he had hoped for a son, but the sentiment was only fleeting; Helen had safely passed through her peril, and he was ready to give the little stranger a most loving welcome, when the opportunity was afforded him. The opportunity seemed distressfully long in coming. He had opened, and, with the doctor's assistance, disposed of, a bottle of champagne in honor of the occasion, and had a second in his hand, when Norah came in, bearing the tiny bundle of lace and soft flannel, her face beaming with delight.

"Arrah, Mr. Wayne! but it's a moighty foine gurrel we've got; sure, an' she's the pictur' of yerself, God bless her," and she laid the light burden in his arms.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

In due time the new-gomer was christened Helen Hart-hope, at the young father's instance, but from the first, he always spoke of her as little Hope, and that became her household name.

Any regret that Wayne might have felt over the sex of his first-born, was transitory; he took little Hope to his heart, with a tenderness that was but a reflection of that which he felt for the mother, and in a day or two was gloating over her as a miser does over a great treasure that has unexpectedly come into his hands. He walked about among his acquaintances, with his head well in the air, receiving their congratulations with no small amount of complacency, and feeling a profound pity for such of them as did not possess a wife and a baby. He wished his mother and Budlong could enjoy the inestimable privilege of seeing the marvelous infant, and remarking her many perfections, and he lost no time in writing both these faithful ones, very fully, concerning her. Budlong, being in the heart of the Indian Ocean at the time, failed to receive immediately, and consequently to respond to, his share of the glad tidings, but from Mrs. Wayne came a few tremulously-written lines, after a brief delay. "I rejoice with you, my son, in your new happiness," she wrote, "and I would so love to see the little babe, and hold her in my arms, but this may not be, for reasons I need not explain. Kiss her for grandma, and tell Helen I gave her a daughter's place in my heart long ago. May God have you and yours in His holy keeping always."

From his father and his youngest sister came never a

word, but the eldest, who had at last, with sundry misgivings, consented to become Mrs. Sweet, and to assume a general supervision over the sale of religious books from the market-basket, and the preparation of discourses to be delivered before thinly-attended meetings of the Missionary Society, wrote him in scathing terms to the effect that he ought to have been satisfied after disgracing hopelessly the family name, without having the effrontery to advise those who had been his friends that he had become the father of a child of shame.

By the same mail this pattern of sisterly affection wrote Stella—who had come into her inheritance by the death by apoplexy of old Zicazal, and was making no nonsensical pretences of mourning—to be sure and visit her when next she came to Tadmore, at which invitation the heiress turned up her finely-cut nose in contempt, for with the accession of wealth had come a profound feeling of indifference for any class of friends whose walks in life were not liberally sprinkled with gold-dust.

Steve laughed, but not quite hilariously, over the effusion with which his sister favored him; but he did not show it to Helen, and, by way of recovering his mental equipoise, went to have a look at the baby, whom he silently swore should never know aught of Christians or Christianity if he could help it.

The novel did not make the best of headway during the first few weeks of little Hope's existence, for Steve spent a good many hours in Helen's room, while she fared slowly back from the confines of the valley of the shadow of death, whither she had journeyed to secure the little life that was now her first care, her unspeakable joy. Maternity had wrought a subtle change in her, that her husband noticed with a vague dread, which he could not understand, and tried resolutely to dismiss from his mind. There was the *same bright smile* whenever he addressed her, but there **was**

an indescribable shadow behind it, that had the strange effect of rendering it more radiant, the countenance far more attractive, and in a higher sense than it had ever been before. She had never been given to expressing much weak concern about their temporal affairs, although suggesting from time to time, since the advent of the panic, such prudential measures as might have been expected from a careful, intelligent housewife; but now no apprehension concerning the future seemed to disturb her in the least, nor did she ever so gently chide Steve for spending so much time at her bedside, to the detriment of the great novel from which he was to win fame and fortune. I think Norah Flaherty discovered this change also, with the unerring eye of affection; at all events, she became wondrously tender of the mistress she adored, and many a time every day, while about her homely duties, and often when awakening from unquiet slumber at night, the Virgin Mother was besought to intercede that this young mother, with a baby clasped to her bosom, might be shielded from every danger and mischief.

Still, Norah's heart was troubled.

Helen recovered slowly, but at last appeared in the old office again, seemingly in perfect health, with a marvelous new beauty in her face that made Wayne uneasy and caused Norah to whisper *Hail, Mary!* whenever she recalled it.

Little Hope was nearly five months old, when, one starlight Saturday evening, Helen, announced her intention of attending church next day, for the first time since her illness.

"I'm feeling so well and strong," she said, "that I shall go to morning service, and, oh, Steve, I do so much wish that, for this one time, you would go with me!"

"I'll do anything but that to oblige you, my dear," Steve said, with the bitter memory of his sister's letter fresh in his

mind; "but of churches I had a surfeit long ago, and, while I remain in my senses, shall have nothing more to do with them."

"Don't say that, please."

"I must say it, if I am to speak the truth. You believe in churches and in something you call religion; so does my blessed old mother, and both of you live what you believe, which is something I can say of very few other professed Christians. I do not wish to change your faith, but I can't adopt it, and won't make a pretence of doing so, by going to a place where something called the gospel is preached, by a man who is paid for doing it, to a congregation of hypocrites."

Helen rose and laid her hand lightly on his shoulder. "My husband," she said, with unwonted solemnity, "the Christian religion is a truth, not a superstition, and you will have to acknowledge this, sooner or later; but I fear you will have to go through dreadful trouble before you will be willing to own that you have been in the wrong all these years. Good-night."

She went quietly out, and he presently heard her singing to the baby that sweet old cradle ditty, "Hush, my dear, lie still and slumber."

He was a little ashamed of the vehemence with which he had battled for some views, of the correctness of which he was not always quite certain; but his conscience was not oppressively active, and, the spirit of composition being strong upon him, he fell to work upon the novel, and was soon so completely absorbed that he took no note of time. He was still writing, when the bell in a neighboring church tower commenced to toll the hour of midnight; as the sound of the last stroke died away, there came a rush of damp, cold air, that seemed to chill him to the vitals, and with it such a sense of awful, close-impending danger, that his very soul *seemed* paralyzed. He started up, with great beads of

clammy perspiration on his forehead, and stood gazing at nothing, bewildered, but expectant; then the door flew open, and Norah, in her night attire, with a terror-stricken face, stood before him. "Ochone! ochone! Mr. Wayne! did ye hear it?" she cried, wringing her hands.

"Did I hear what?" he compelled himself to say, in his usual voice.

"Ah, the banshee! an' its trouble that'll be afther overtakin' us! Wurra, wurra! Holy Mary an' the saints defend us!"

"I have heard of this old country superstition," he said, still speaking without any indication of excitement; "I can't say I have much faith in it, however, and you mustn't put any notions of this kind into your mistress' head, for it might alarm her."

"Shure, ye might know I wouldn't alarum her or hurt a hair of the sweet cr'atur's head, Misther Wayne; but ye'd bettther be seein' to the missus, sor."

"That I will at once, and if there's anything amiss will call you."

Wayne hurried up stairs, feeling more apprehensive and nervous than he would have been willing to admit, but his fears appeared to have been groundless, for Helen lay quietly sleeping, with little Hope by her side, a look of perfect content on her face; so he stole back to report to the faithful serving woman that all was well.

But was all well? He considered long and seriously over this question. In Norah's banshee he had no great faith, as he had said, but what meant that chilling blast coming from nowhere, that sense of dire peril, that must have been communicated by some intelligence, unless, indeed, it was a phantasy born of some nervous derangement? And, so speculating, he finally fell asleep in his office chair.

The sun was shining brightly when he awoke, and Helen was standing beside him, fresh, bright, and the picture of health, and all his foreboding vanished into thin air.

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"I ought to beg your pardon, my dear, for going off to sleep here like a donkey, but I couldn't exactly help it."

"And I ought to scold you for keeping such unearthly hours, for you must have been at work the greater part of the night, judging from that pile of manuscript; but come to breakfast now; Norah's wrath will be ablaze, if her steak, or biscuits are overdone the least fraction."

Helen was unusually cheerful and chatty during the meal and Steve fully caught her spirit, but Norah's face remained clouded, though she made no allusion to the experience of the preceding night.

When breakfast was over Wayne went back to his office, to enjoy a pipe and glance over a late magazine; he heard Helen singing about the house, now the first bars of a church chant, now a lullaby verse, and then a line or two of some old song, and it occurred to him, in a vague way, that she seemed more thoroughly and perfectly happy than at any time since their marriage; finally, she came in, dressed for church, kissed him good-bye, lingered for a moment, as if to take in every detail of the room where they had spent so many happy days together, and then passed out.

Steve read and dozed for an hour; then he suddenly heard Helen speak his name, in a sort of a gasping whisper. He started, up expecting to see her standing at his side, but he was quite alone, and the silence of the room was unbroken, save by the ticking of the clock on the mantelpiece. Involuntarily he turned his eyes toward it, recalling the trivial circumstance that he had wound it up just before Helen went out, and, as he looked, the pendulum, which was visible through the glass door, ceased to swing and the clock stopped. While idly striving to account for this, there was a hurried step on the graveled walk, the outer door was flung unceremoniously open, and Mr. Graem strode in, his face pale and frightened.

"*Come with me Wayne,*" he said, in a hoarse, broken voice,

"Helen has—has—fainted—come just as you are; don't wait a moment."

He obeyed, mechanically, without any new sense of impending trouble, scarcely with any sense at all. Out into the bright sunshine they went, swiftly and silently traversing the few blocks that separated the cottage from the church; then Wayne saw, but with no premonition of what it portended, a great concourse of wildly-excited people, gathered in front of a private residence that fell back and opened a passage for him. Still moving mechanically, he passed through the gate, and the open door, observing with a kind of dull wonder the many pitying glances bestowed upon him, on through the hall, and into a front room, filled with weeping women, where on a lounge lay Helen, motionless, colorless, with half-closed eyes, and lips apart.

In one instant the dreadful truth dawned upon him, and, with an awful imprecation and a cry like a wild beast wounded to death, he clasped the inanimate body in his arms, bore her to an inner chamber, and lay her on a bed; then he turned back to close and bolt the door.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Death had come to Helen instantly, painlessly; there had been no lingering sickness; no gradual failing of strength, mental or physical; no final desperate struggle with the grim King of Terrors, but while all her powers were at their best, and while listening to the magnificent service of the church she loved, the blow had fallen. She sank back, murmuring the name of her husband, and was dead. A more fitting death for a Christian could not be imagined; a more fitting time and place for a Christian to die could not be desired.

Through some inexplicable psychology what had happened was immediately known to every member of the congrega-

tion. A silence like the grave pervaded it until the voice of the aged rector, solemn and tremulous with emotion, slowly uttered the admonition, so often given, so seldom heeded: "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." There was heard a simultaneous sobbing of hundreds of people; awed into sympathy by an event so tragic and mysterious, all rose to their feet, while Mr. Graem, beside whom Helen had been sitting, carried her out of the church and into an adjoining residence. Half a score of physicians were quickly summoned, or came without waiting to be called. Of course, they knew little or nothing about the cause of the death, and, equally of course, they promptly invented one to suit the exigencies of the case, supplying it with an unintelligible name, and with this the populace was more than content, while it marveled at the occult knowledge possessed by men of medicine. It satisfied the civil authorities, along with all other classes of citizens, so Wayne was spared the hideous formality of a coroner's inquest.

For two hours the stricken husband remained alone with his dead, sternly deaf to all offers of sympathy or assistance. God only knows how that period was passed, what prayers or blasphemies he muttered; whether his perception was cruelly active, enabling him to appreciate the depth and extent of his bereavement, or mercifully deadened, as the physical senses are by an anæsthetic, thus destroying or impairing his capacity to suffer.

When all other means of obtaining access to the locked room short of physical force had been tried and failed, Norah and little Hope were sent for. The dreadful intelligence had reached the faithful Irish woman, and for a little time her grief had been uncontrollable; then she remembered the broken-hearted man and the helpless infant, left by Providence, as she considered, to her care, and by such a *mighty effort*, as comparatively few who move in the higher

social circles are capable of making, she became calm, and was prepared to act intelligently. The messenger found her on her knees before a crucifix, with the child cuddled to her breast.

"Shure, an' I'll be afther goin' to the masther, immajetly," she said; "who ilse'll look afther him now? And the swate Missus, she loved him so, the colleen bawn; the saints be praised."

Steve yielded to Norah's entreaties and gave up his dead. Loving hands bore Helen back to the desolated home, and there she lay, so beautiful in death, for a day and a night, while those who had known her came for a last look and a last farewell; then other loving hands carried her to a grave on a sunny hillside.

It was all over; the dead was buried, and a man still young in years, but bending under such a weight of sorrow as is not frequently laid upon any shoulders, brooded in his home, from which the light had gone out, over a future that looked as dreary as the Sahara desert to a western traveler. To take up his burden and pass on, seemed impossible. Hope as well as ambition was dead, life was no longer worth living, and oblivion unattainable.

There was this glimmer of light—Norah was true as the needle to the pole, and from her warm heart tried to comfort him by shrewd reminders of little Hope's existence, and she contrived to keep her almost constantly in his sight. Once he was near having a downright quarrel with her, and that was when he hinted that his means were so much reduced he could not, for the time being, adequately compensate her for her services.

"An' is it money ye think I'd be afther takin' for mindin' the swate cr'ater's infant?" she cried, in a towering passion; "an' it's proud I am to kape her; and you, sir, may the Howly Virgin send ye swate comfo't."

"I understand you, Norah, and I thank you," he answered. "*I shan't offend again.*"

It was during this troublous time, also, that uncouth Prometheus, of his own accord, found employment, that he might exhibit the sympathy he felt for his patron, by occasionally bringing some table delicacy that had been honestly purchased.

Hardly knowing what he did, Steve wrote his mother and Shannahan, also, of Helen's death. Mrs. Wayne never received the letter, for the night before Helen died she breathed her last, and as pure a soul as ever inhabited an earthly tabernacle, one that had remained uncontaminated for more than a half century among such vainglory and self-righteousness as the Dr. Adamants everywhere exemplify, winged its way to the Eternal City, with its shining streets and gates of jasper, there to be told by Him who sits upon the white throne that the Christian charity she had so faithfully practiced was the greatest of Christian virtues.

Mrs. Sweet wrote briefly, advising Wayne of his mother's death, but made no allusion to his own great loss, or to the motherless little one. Let us call blind credulity to our aid, and hope she knew nothing of the overwhelming calamity that had overtaken her brother, and, while we are about it, we will strenuously endeavor to believe, also, that no blood relative of Steve's ever heard of it, for no word of condolence reached him from anyone of them, nor did any offer even a temporary asylum to little Hope.

Shannahan answered the sad communication from his former professional chum in person, and walked into Wayne's cottage one evening, less than two weeks after Helen had been carried out of it to the grave on the sunny hillslope.

"I thought it best to come, my dear fellow," he said, as he warmly grasped his hand, "for I was sure the sight of an old friend's face would do you good, while this trouble was new."

"It was the kindest thing a man ever did, Shannahan, and, *from my heart, I thank you.*"

"Never mind about the thanks; they are implied, of course; the question is, Wayne, what are you going to do with yourself?"

"I don't know, I am sure."

"That's as I supposed, and I have been doing some thinking for you, just to tide over till you're in condition to think for yourself. When your letter came, Claymore and I went into a committee of the whole, and it's all arranged; you're to come back to the *Cormorant* and take a place on the city department with me, or go on the foreign correspondence staff, just as you please."

"Both you and Mr. Claymore have been very thoughtful, Shannahan, and I hope I need not say how entirely, how highly, I appreciate it; but I can't accept your generous offer, at least not now; I am too utterly broken up for any kind of work."

"You have suffered too seriously to remain idle, my boy; a month or two of brooding in this house, where you have been far more than ordinarily happy, I imagine, would drive you insane. You must work, forthwith and systematically, if you would keep your reason."

"There's something in that, certainly."

"There's everything in it; but, by the by, what have you been about, besides writing those sketches you sent me, since your railroad came to grief? The sketches, I may mention, are all disposed of to Snarl, our old dramatic critic, you remember, who started a new monthly a while ago, that promises to be a success, and I have a cheque for you for rather a handsome amount."

"I have a novel about half written," Steve said slowly, "but I don't know what it will amount to; I am half afraid to show you the manuscript, for it's my first endeavor at continuous romance."

"This sounds encouraging; let's have a look at it, and while I run over the opening chapters, give me a pipe, and

mind; "but of churches I had a surfeit long ago, and, while I remain in my senses, shall have nothing more to do with them."

"Don't say that, please."

"I must say it, if I am to speak the truth. You believe in churches and in something you call religion; so does my blessed old mother, and both of you live what you believe, which is something I can say of very few other professed Christians. I do not wish to change your faith, but I can't adopt it, and won't make a pretence of doing so, by going to a place where something called the gospel is preached, by a man who is paid for doing it, to a congregation of hypocrites."

Helen rose and laid her hand lightly on his shoulder. "My husband," she said, with unwonted solemnity, "the Christian religion is a truth, not a superstition, and you will have to acknowledge this, sooner or later; but I fear you will have to go through dreadful trouble before you will be willing to own that you have been in the wrong all these years. Good-night."

She went quietly out, and he presently heard her singing to the baby that sweet old cradle ditty, "Hush, my dear, lie still and slumber."

He was a little ashamed of the vehemence with which he had battled for some views, of the correctness of which he was not always quite certain; but his conscience was not oppressively active, and, the spirit of composition being strong upon him, he fell to work upon the novel, and was soon so completely absorbed that he took no note of time. He was still writing, when the bell in a neighboring church tower commenced to toll the hour of midnight; as the sound of the last stroke died away, there came a rush of damp, cold air, that seemed to chill him to the vitals, and with it such a sense of awful, close-impending danger, that his very soul seemed paralyzed. He started up, with great beads of

clammy perspiration on his forehead, and stood gazing at nothing, bewildered, but expectant; then the door flew open, and Norah, in her night attire, with a terror-stricken face, stood before him. "Ochone! ochone! Mr. Wayne! did ye hear it?" she cried, wringing her hands.

"Did I hear what?" he compelled himself to say, in his usual voice.

"Ah, the banshee! an' its trouble that'll be after overtakin' us! Wurra, wurra! Holy Mary an' the saints defend us!"

"I have heard of this old country superstition," he said, still speaking without any indication of excitement; "I can't say I have much faith in it, however, and you mustn't put any notions of this kind into your mistress' head, for it might alarm her."

"Shure, ye might know I wouldn't alarm her or hurt a hair of the sweet cr'atur's head, Misther Wayne; but ye'd better be seein' to the missus, sor."

"That I will at once, and if there's anything amiss will call you."

Wayne hurried up stairs, feeling more apprehensive and nervous than he would have been willing to admit, but his fears appeared to have been groundless, for Helen lay quietly sleeping, with little Hope by her side, a look of perfect content on her face; so he stole back to report to the faithful serving woman that all was well.

But was all well? He considered long and seriously over this question. In Norah's banshee he had no great faith, as he had said, but what meant that chilling blast coming from nowhere, that sense of dire peril, that must have been communicated by some intelligence, unless, indeed, it was a phantasy born of some nervous derangement? And, so speculating, he finally fell asleep in his office chair.

The sun was shining brightly when he awoke, and Helen was standing beside him, fresh, bright, and the picture of health, and all his foreboding vanished into thin air.

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The sun was shining brightly when he awoke, and Helen was standing beside him, fresh, bright, and the picture of health, and all his foreboding vanished into thin air.

Helen and his mother, sometimes together, more often singly, were with him almost constantly in the old office, where he continued to spend most of the day. He never saw them, though he knew of their going and coming, and had already fallen into the way of expecting them longingly, for their presence brought a degree of restful peace with which he had long been unfamiliar.

In this abnormal mental state he re-read Shannahan's letter, several hours after its reception, and again dully wondered why he felt no excitement over the contents of it, but he signed the contract, wrote a brief note, in which he expressed, as best he could, the sentiments he was conscious he should have entertained, and these he enclosed with the manuscript, and carried the package to the post office, after which he went back to his haunted room, where he remained always expectant, never weary, until the gray of daylight appeared in the east.

Norah's face wore an anxious look when she found him in the office that morning, and understood through some description of prescience that he had not been abed; there was nothing very remarkable about the master's spending an entire night at his writing, but the master's face had never before worn such an expression in the morning—an expression that, to Norah's thinking, indicated he was taking a queer way to rest—having nothing more to do.

This was Friday morning. The day was pleasant, and Norah tried to persuade Wayne to go out, after finding that he was not disposed to lie down; but he declined, and remained in his office-chair, thinking, thinking. His thoughts took a wide range that day, they went back over the whole course of his life, recalling every day, almost every hour, of it with startling minuteness. There was a good deal of it that he could not recall complacently; no outrageous sins *haunted his memory*, but there were many misdeeds, many *errors*, many devious wanderings from the straight path, that

collectively formed an unpleasant aggregate. For the first time in years it occurred to him that he had cherished some very strong resentments, possibly without an entirely adequate cause, and various skeptical beliefs, which, perhaps, would better not have been cherished at all. He had felt and expressed an utter abhorrence for Christians and Christianity, because he had known some self-righteous Pharisees who professed that faith; but was it safe to consider it a superstitious delusion, for this reason, when such women as his mother and Helen had also believed in it?

Thinking thus, he bethought him of the night before Helen died, when she asked him to go to church with her and he refused. Ah, how sorry he was that he had done so! for, had he gone with her, he would have caught her last loving glance, and his arms, not another's, would have borne her from the place where she died. It suddenly occurred to him that he would attend Helen's church the next Sunday, out of regard for her memory; it would gratify her, he was certain; perhaps she would join him there in spirit, as she had been with him of late; and, having reached this conclusion, he dozed off to sleep.

His resolution was unchanged when he woke; he kept it in mind all day, and, on Sunday morning, carried it into effect. He had never been in an Episcopal church before, and knew nothing of its ritual, but there was something about the subdued quiet of the place, the dim light falling through stained glass windows, the altar with its consecrated accessories, that appealed to his highest sensibilities, as anything connected with the church of his fathers never had done. The organ pealed forth the voluntary, the venerable priest entered, took his place, and commenced the service with the familiar sentence, "I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto him: Father, I have sinned before Heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called ~~thy~~ son."

Wayne listened, conscience-stricken. Had he been seen to enter, and had that apt verse of Scripture been selected with a view of admonishing him that the time had indeed come for him to follow the example of the prodigal? So impressed was he with this idea, so fully did he believe that he was to be preached at, after the manner of Dr. Adamant, that it was with difficulty he retained his composure. He fancied that all eyes were upon him, that all knew of his irreligious life, and were mentally commenting upon it, agape to hear the next pointed allusion to himself. So he followed the service apprehensively until the rector began to chant the Litany; the music of the grand old Gregorian chant affected him as music had never affected him before; those petitions, framed to meet every want and fear of humanity, touched a chord in his heart that, before this, had never vibrated, and it at last dawned upon him that it was the many, not a single individual, which the services of this church were designed to reach. There was one prayer of the Litany, which somehow seemed to exactly meet his case; it read: "In all time of our tribulation, in all time of our prosperity, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, Good Lord, deliver us!" This he repeated over to himself many times, and he thought it must have been in Helen's heart at the moment of her death.

At last the long service was concluded; the rector slowly ascended the narrow pulpit and announced his text—only these few simple words, "The Spirit and the Bride say come"—but, ah, me! how replete with comfort for the erring!

The sermon was very brief, occupying scarcely twenty minutes. There was no high-flown attempt at eloquence, no oratorical display, only a plain dissertation upon Christ's infinite mercy, and an earnest invitation in His name to every sinner to come and partake of the water of life freely. This was a new religion to the weary, heart-sick man; of

God's wrath he had heard much in the days of his youth, but he did not remember to have ever before listened to a discourse upon God's love. The impression made upon Wayne's mind by the services and that unpretending sermon was so profound that he lingered in his seat, forgetting for a moment where he was, after the benediction had been spoken, and the congregation had withdrawn; then he awoke to a consciousness of his surroundings, and saw the rector, still wearing his surplice, standing in the chancel. Yielding to an impulse, he went forward to the rail. "I'm Mr. Wayne," he said.

"Yes; the husband of the lady whose sudden death so greatly shocked us all, recently; you have been sorely tried, sir, and have my heartfelt sympathy. I hope you have known where to go for consolation in your trouble."

"I can scarcely say that I have, sir; at least, you will not suppose so, when I tell you that I have not been in a church before for many years. I have been an irreligious man, a hopeless sinner, from a clergyman's standpoint."

"Scarcely hopeless, since Christ came into the world to save sinners."

"That may be true, in a general way; I don't know."

"It is true in every way, and every sinner, which means every member of the human family, may have eternal life through that supreme mediation, if he will believe and repent."

"That was the tenor of your discourse, to-day; I am glad I heard it; when I have had time to think it over I should like to talk with you again."

"I shall always be glad to speak with you upon the most important of all subjects, to do what I can to heal the cruel wound in your heart; such is the office of a Christian clergyman. Come to me freely, or send for me, if you require my services, at your home."

"I thank you; good-bye."

Wayne turned away; his glance slowly wandered over the church, and then, for the first time that day, he felt Helen's presence, and remembered that this was the scene upon which she had last looked, and again there came to his mind the prayer of the Litany: "In all time of our tribulation, in all time of our prosperity, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, Good Lord, deliver us."

He wandered about in the fields that afternoon for hours—Helen always with him, the Litany prayer always in his memory. He was not spiritually depressed, yet there was a cloud between his inner vision and the Delectable Mountains that those who are still hopeful of what the future has in store for them always see looming somewhere in the distance; he was not physically weary, yet, as he plodded aimlessly on, absolute rest seemed the only thing worth having.

He reached home in the gloaming, and found Norah, with little Hope in her arms, anxiously awaiting his coming. He drank the cup of tea she brought him, and fondled the child for a few moments; then he went up-stairs to Helen's room, which had been unoccupied since her death, took her prayer-book from the table, and sat down in her arm-chair.

The night was far spent, when Norah awoke from an uneasy slumber, with the strong conviction upon her that something was amiss, and flew instinctively to her master's chamber. He still sat in the armchair, the prayer-book lay open on his knee, a dark-red flush was on his face, his half-opened eyes were suffused with tears; he was breathing, but his respiration came in great gasping sobs. Norah uttered one frantic scream of anguish and terror, and, falling upon her knees, began to pray. Wayne's eyes unclosed with a momentary look of recognition, then he slowly articulated, in a strange whisper, that seemed to fill the whole room, "In all time of our tribulation, in all time of our prosperity, in the hour of death ——"

The whisper became inarticulate, the labored breathing ceased, and Norah was alone with the dead.

Was it well with him in the hereafter, where wrong-doing is punished, and good deeds are recompensed? I do not know, nor dare I attempt to lift the veil that conceals the future from mortal vision, but this is assuredly true: One who was infinitely pitiful, though "A Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief," has said "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." That invitation has never been canceled, that promise has never been withdrawn, that "rest" is perfect—eternal. May each worn wayfarer find it, when the dreary day of life is ended, and the night of death cometh!

CHAPTER XL.

A month after Stephen Wayne's death, Norah and little Hope were established in a pretty cottage on the south side of Long Island, and Mr. Budlong had assumed the charge of them.

The old sailor had arrived in New York from his East India voyage just in time to learn that the brilliant young fellow, who had been the apple of his eye for so many years, was in his grave, stricken down after battling, with such strength as he possessed, against crushing sorrow. Budlong wasted not a moment in unavailing lamentations: Steve had left a baby that must have a home, and he alone should give it to her. A home for the little one meant a home for her devoted attendant also; therefore, Norah could consider herself provided for during the rest of her life.

So far as Budlong knew, when he took upon himself this grave responsibility for a man of his years, he had no resources save his profession and the savings from his last

voyage, but that did not signify, he could earn money for another ten years, he considered, as a first mate; the cottage was rented and furnished, and thither he brought two persons—one a helpless infant—neither of whom were bound to him by any ties of blood, intending to care for them thenceforward, without the smallest notion that he was doing a particularly generous or heroic thing.

But Providence had kept an eye on this grand old mariner; the bank wreck did not prove to be ultimately such a hopeless affair as was at first supposed. It resumed business after a long interval, and, about the time our large-souled old friend was casting about for another ship to voyage in, the news came that it was ready to pay its old depositors dollar for dollar, with interest. So there was no longer any necessity for the rapidly-aging sailor to assume the hard calling he had followed nearly forty years any longer; the pretty cottage was purchased, and there he settled down, with Norah to look after his well-being and little Hope to amuse his leisure hours, seeing very clearly that his last days were to be his best days.

To that cottage, as time went on, Shannahan and Claymore often came for a pipe and a glass with the old seafaring man, and to learn how little Hope fared. Either would have assumed the expense of her maintenance and education had that been necessary, but it was not, for the Miss had her own belongings; the first and last novel penned by her father had proved a wonderful success, and from the author's percentage on the sale of it, a little fortune had accrued for the child, who was also known to be the formally-constituted heiress of Jerubdiah Budlong, mariner.

To that cottage never came, however, any person with whom little Hope could claim kinship, nor did anyone of her father's race ever inquire concerning her; but He who notes the fall of the sparrow gave her into the keeping of

two tender, faithful guardians, who loved her as the child of Steve and Helen Wayne.

I do not suppose for a moment that either Budlong or Norah would count for much in the estimation of any Pharisee, who, standing in the temple, thanks God that he is not like the publican, praying over against him for mercy for a confessed sinner; the one was enrolled upon the books of no church, and bore no odor of sanctity about with him; the other was a Roman Catholic, sincerely adhering to a faith I could not profess; but when the final awards are made, when motives come to be scanned by the All-seeing Eye, when actions are weighed in the unerring balance of eternal justice, it may come to pass that Dr. Adamant, standing abashed, without a wedding garment, at the great wedding supper, will hear, with amazement, the Master of the Feast say to these Samaritans, sitting humbly on the lowest seat, "Friends, come up higher."

THE END.

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